CITIES ON THE MOVE:

THE TRAVELS OF MARINA BAY, SINGAPORE

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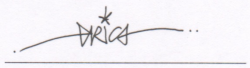
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis. This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.



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ABSTRACT

From Shanghai's Bund to Dubai's Marina, waterfront developments are increasingly popular urban forms worldwide. Using a case study of Marina Bay, Singapore, I argue that urban waterfronts are not only sites of local boosterism but also fundamentally translocal landscapes assembled out of elsewheres. In this thesis, I draw on the literature of a more-than-territorial urban to map out how Marina Bay is situated within broader flows of *people* (talent and expertise), *places* (buildings and built form) and *policies* (ideas and knowledge) on the move. In doing so, I illustrate how Marina Bay is not only a product of travels but is also capable of travelling as a model of inspiration in its own right. By critically considering the translocal flows that are going into the (re)production of Marina Bay, I hope to answer calls to move beyond theorizing the unbounded city to engage with the former in actual empirical practice.

Keywords: *urban, mobilities, assemblage, learning, architecture, Singapore*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Cities on the move

Long before the term 'globalization' became fashionable, the territory of Singapore was already intertwined with places elsewhere. An important trading post under British colonial rule from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, merchant ships would converge upon this small island bringing stories, goods and people from afar. The Singapore River became the favored setting for such trans-border encounters where items were exchanged, goods were loaded and unloaded, and where people would converse and listen to tales told of distant shores (Dobbs, 2003). Nevertheless, as time went by, these rhythms of movement that came to define this riverine community were profoundly disrupted and eventually ceased. Today, what lies at the mouth of this river is Marina Bay. With the relocation of maritime trading activity to Keppel Harbor, modern-day bumboats ferrying wide-eyed tourists have since replaced the merchant ships of yore. The Singapore River, too, no longer flows into the open ocean; the area is now an enclosed freshwater reservoir. What was once the entrance to a bustling waterway has given way to a high-rise landscape, a landscape where a sail-like silhouette and a curious boat-like structure atop three towers are the only faint echoes of its maritime beginnings.

The remarkable transformation of Singapore's downtown core through the landscape of Marina Bay is the focus of this thesis. With neoliberal globalization bringing about intense inter-city competition, spectacular urban landscapes such as Marina Bay have become important symbolic manifestations of a city's 'success'. Asian cities, in particular, are participating actively in this trend of urban entrepreneurialism and hyperbuilding to raise their profile on the world stage (Harvey, 1989; Ong, 2011). What makes Marina Bay distinct, however, and thus worthy of study is its unique political context. Like much of the rest of Singapore, the fashioning of Marina Bay bears the unmistakable marks of a pro-active, developmental state heavily involved in the formulation and implementation of its vision. Yet, while many have pointed to Singapore's internal state mechanics as a determining factor of its ongoing success (Chua, 1996; Kong & Yeoh, 2003; Olds & Yeung, 2004), few have

considered in any sustained manner the role played by state actors on a transnational arena to assemble and articulate Singapore as a global city (although see Chang & Huang, 2008). This is where this thesis comes in. In this study, I seek to complement such inward focused analyses with a more outward looking one by considering how state actors have worked not only within but also beyond Singapore in developing Marina Bay. Such an agenda, I argue, is a valuable and timely one, especially so with recent developments in the literature urging scholars to move beyond territorialized notions of a bounded, self-contained urban. Drawing on the mobilities literature and assemblage thinking, I develop a theoretical framework that understands cities and urban landscapes as simultaneously produced out of various travels while also travelling in various forms. Employing qualitative methodologies including semi-structured interviews, tag-alongs and discourse analysis, I seek to map out and examine the mobilities of *people* (talent and expertise), *places* (buildings and built form) and *policies* (ideas and knowledge) that have gone into the (re)production of this spectacular landscape. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate the usefulness of understanding the urban as simultaneously relational/territorial (McCann & Ward, 2010) in both theory and empirical practice.

1.2. Thesis aims and contributions

In studying the travels of Marina Bay, the aims of this thesis are three-fold. Firstly, this study joins a growing body of work to plug a glaring empirical gap in urban studies – the lack of analysis of the inter-connections between cities and the actors that ply those linkages (Smith, 2003a; 2003b; Taylor, 2004). Drawing on the literature on a more-than-territorial urban, I conceptualize Marina Bay as a landscape that is situated within and assembled out of broader flows and relations. In doing so, I ask the following questions:

Table 1: Research questions

The travels that have gone into the making of Marina Bay	Which other cities and/or waterfronts did Singapore make reference to or learn from?
	Who were the key actors or transfer agents involved in bringing ideas from elsewhere to Singapore? What happened to those ideas as they travelled to Singapore?
The travels of Marina Bay	How is Marina Bay being extended beyond Singapore through representations in various media?
	Is there evidence of Marina Bay's success being referenced by or learnt from by cities elsewhere? How is the 'Marina Bay model', if any, being communicated?

The research questions listed above in Table 1 are designed as probes into the translocal flows that have gone into the (re)production of this spectacular landscape. As opposed to work that deals with only one aspect of cities as mobile, I consider the travels that have gone into the making of Marina Bay as well as the travels of Marina Bay itself. While one may criticize such a transnational focus for ignoring the impacts that Marina Bay is having on the local urban fabric, such critiques forget that it is precisely these translocal flows that suffer from a greater lack of attention and thus require more urgent study (see Chapter Two). Spectacular urban developments have after all long been studied for their local effects and I am certain such studies of Marina Bay will eventually emerge in the published literature. As such, what this thesis offers instead is a lesser-seen perspective that I hope will significantly push the boundaries of our existing mental frameworks.

Secondly, this thesis illuminates the methodological challenges involved in researching cities as mobile. It thus contributes to ongoing discussions on global ethnographies and mobile methods (Burawoy *et al.*, 2000; Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2011), especially so by moving beyond its largely theoretical musings to consider the implications of such research in practice. That said, what is presented here is of course inevitably incomplete. I do not (and cannot) claim to present a complete picture of the travels of Marina Bay. Nevertheless, I write with what I trust is an honest, reflexive voice on the challenges faced in studying its travels in hopes of paving the way for future methodological innovations.

Thirdly, this thesis aims to critically consider the implications of cities as mobile as read in the light of an increasingly post-structural and post-colonial urban studies. The travels of Marina Bay are not random processes in a world awash in flows. Instead, they consist of situated and even highly territorialized imaginaries and practices that seem to suggest the persistence of uneven power relations. Even as some scholars have argued that cities have the right to inhabit coeval spaces (Robinson, 2006), there is a keen difference between the valid theoretical proposition that *all* cities have a place in academic theorization and the empirical reality whereby only *certain* cities dominate the visible scene. As this thesis will show, developing a more inclusive (and politically sensitive) understanding of cities as mobile must therefore involve placing back those very cities that we have been wishing to de-center.

1.3. Thesis organization

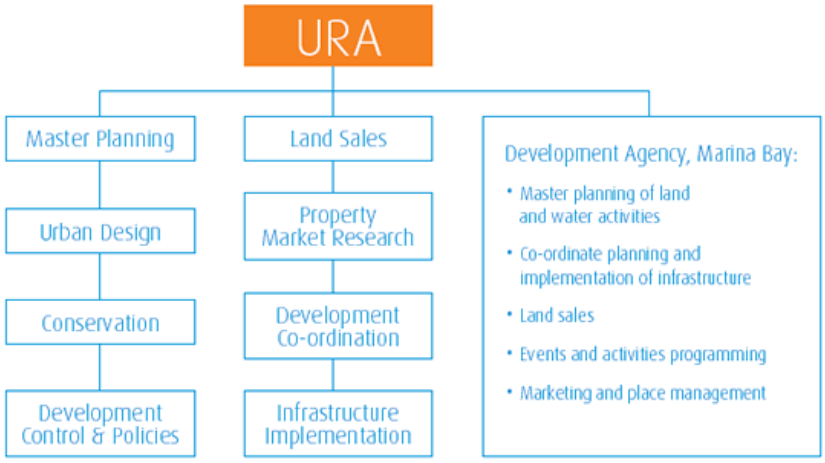
In order to achieve the above aims, this thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter serves as a road map for this thesis. Chapter Two then situates this thesis within the broader literature of a more-than-territorial urban and develops a theoretical framework that draws on both mobilities and assemblage thinking. Next, Chapter Three outlines the fieldwork strategies employed and reflects on the methodological challenges involved. The next three chapters that follow are empirical ones. Chapter Four, titled 'Visions of elsewhere: Identifying global models', illustrates how Singapore turned to cities and waterfronts abroad as models of inspiration. Building on the former, Chapter Five, titled 'Talent from elsewhere: Courting global expertise', examines the transnational practices and actors that enabled ideas from elsewhere to be assembled in Marina Bay. Nevertheless, even as Marina Bay is a product of travels, it too, is also travelling through these very same circuits. Hence, Chapter Six, titled 'Journeys to elsewhere: Seeking global recognition', ties up the empirical section by detailing how Marina Bay itself is becoming a model that other cities are seeking to emulate. Finally, Chapter Seven concludes by summarizing this study's key findings and reflecting on their implications on our understanding of cities as mobile. Before moving on however, it is necessary to contextualize this study with an introduction to Marina Bay.

1.4. Introducing Marina Bay, Singapore

> Our vision for Marina Bay is that of a 24/7 live-work-play environment - a new downtown that is the essence of what we think we want a global city to be in the future.
>
> - Singapore's National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan (*The Straits Times*, 28 July 2006)

Marina Bay is a 360-hectare urban waterfront development situated at the southern tip of Singapore. An architectural vision lying atop reclaimed land, it is a spectacular landscape upon which much of Singapore's global city aspirations are being pegged. Planning for Marina Bay began in the 1960s as state planners foresaw the need to expand what was the existing downtown core of Singapore – the so-called Golden Shoe. As part of stages VI and VII of the East Coast Reclamation Scheme, three parcels of land were reclaimed to form the man-made bay – Marina Centre, Marina South, and Marina East (Chew & Wei, 1980; URA, 1989a). Upon studying the successful waterfronts of Baltimore's Inner Harbour, Sydney's Darling Harbour and San Francisco's Pier 39, state planners determined that the size of the bay was too large and thus carried out further reclamation to reduce it from 1050m by 780m to 900m by 400m (URA, 1989a; 1989b). Once the reclaimed land had settled, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), a government statutory board in charge of Singapore's land use planning, was given the go ahead by the state to implement its plans in early 2004 (*URA News Releases*, 13 March 2004). As seen in Figure 1, a separate department known as the Marina Bay Development Agency (MBDA) was then set up to coordinate development efforts and promote the area to potential investors through the Marina Bay brand. Today, however, with much of Marina Bay's infrastructure firmly in place, the role of MBDA has shifted to that of a place manager working to ensure that Marina Bay continues to be an attractive place to live, work and play in.

Figure 1: URA's key roles and responsibilities (URA, 2010a)



In order to develop Marina Bay into a 'necklace of attractions' (URA, 2008a) that would seamlessly extend the existing downtown core, URA employed public-private partnerships where the state would provide infrastructure and land while private companies infused the necessary capital and expertise. The Government Land Sales (GLS) programme and the Land Acquisition Act enabled URA (and hence, the state) to effectively maintain control over these parcels of land even as they were handed over to private developers at a profit (see Lee, 2010). By zoning Marina Bay into white sites in an urban grid pattern, URA was able to flexibly amalgamate or subdivide plots of land to accommodate various developments proposed when they opened it for tender (see Table 2; Figure 2).

Table 2: Marina Bay's developmental milestones

Year	Completion of major landmark
2002	Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay
2007	The Float@Marina Bay
2008	Marina Barrage
	Singapore Flyer
2010	Waterfront Promenade
	Helix Bridge
	Marina Bay Financial Centre Phase 1
2011	Marina Bay Sands and ArtScience Museum
2012	Gardens by the Bay
	Marina Bay Financial Centre Phase 2

Figure 2: Marina Bay's major landmarks (URA, 2008b)

The way Marina Bay was developed can be said to be quintessential of Singapore's approach to urban planning. While this is not the place to conduct a detailed review of Singapore planning history, it is useful to point out a few of its distinguishing characteristics as seen in Marina Bay's development. Firstly, urban planning in Singapore has long been a political tool for hegemonic nation building. The early years of Independence saw the ruling government employ the discourse of national survival to bring about not only social discipline but also spatial discipline (Kong & Yeoh, 2003). Urban renewal programs flourished with the state cleaning up polluting landscapes and relocating people from slums to high-rise public housing, all of which ensured that the city-state evolved into a clean and orderly one. Today, however, a different tune of urban renewal is being sung and spectacular landscapes such as Marina Bay have become key sites around which both national pride and international recognition are being nurtured (Pow, 2002; 2010). Even as Singapore's first National Day was celebrated at the Padang – a British cricket and ceremonial ground – to signify a new post-colonial era of self-rule (Kong & Yeoh, 1997), the relocation of the annual National Day Parade to The Float@Marina Bay likewise symbolizes the city-state's global city aspirations that are being played out visually against the backdrop of its new downtown. The hosting of international events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix and the inaugural Youth Olympic Games 2010 too, are not coincidental, as they allow for the beaming of images of Marina Bay across the world. Recognizing that landscapes[1] can 'picture the nation' (Daniels, 1993: 5), the state has once again capitalized on the visual power of material sites such as Marina Bay to promote Singapore as a global city worthy of recognition.

Secondly, urban planning in Singapore is a largely centralized, top-down process in which the state plays a predominant role. As previously noted, urban planning today falls

[1] The study of landscapes is a significant area of research in cultural geography (see Sauer, 1965; Duncan, 1990; Mitchell, 1994; Matless, 2003). Building on much of that rich tradition, this thesis utilizes the notion of landscape both materially (i.e. the built environment) and symbolically (i.e. the inscription of particular meanings by different actors). In other words, Marina Bay is not just a physical landscape but also one that has been utilized rhetorically by the state to reinforce and project Singapore's global city aspirations. More than a passive architectural vision, Marina Bay is capable of doing symbolic work both locally to build national pride among its citizens and internationally to inspire global admiration.

under the purview of the government statutory board known as the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). Originally known as the Urban Renewal Department (URD) in 1966, URA was originally a branch of the Housing and Development Board (HDB) that was made an independent statutory board in 1974 (URA, 1989a). In 1989, it was amalgamated with the Ministry of National Development's (MND) Planning Department and its Research & Statistics Unit to form the present day URA. As Singapore's centralized land use planning authority that reports directly to MND, URA utilizes both Concept Plans to guide long-range development over 40-50 years, as well as shorter term Master Plans that are reviewed once every five years. In the early days of development, the use of technical language allowed state planners to simultaneously depolitize and distance these plans from the largely uneducated population (Chua, 1996). Today, this disconnection between citizens and the planning elite, though certainly much reduced, continues to be seen. For instance, even though public consultations were launched for its 2001 Concept Plan and its 2003 Master Plan, cases where public resistance has resulted in a major overhaul of its plans are rare (Soh & Yuen, 2006). The development of Marina Bay, likewise, was kept away from the public eye with the exception of exhibitions that showcased completed designs (Table 3) and the occasional article in the local newspapers. Unlike waterfront developments in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, plans that went into its development continue today to be kept under wraps and are not accessible by the general public. Furthermore, while the public was involved during the naming of the new bridge and art park at Marina Bay (*URA News Releases*, 17 November 2008), they were only allowed to provide feedback on a list of previously selected names rather than to suggest new ones altogether. Clearly, while participatory planning may be starting to emerge for smaller-scaled projects, the development of high-profile landscapes such as Marina Bay continues to be held largely within the tight fists of technocrats.

Table 3: Public exhibitions on Marina Bay[2]

Dates	Exhibition	Purpose	Location
26 June – 2 Aug 2003	'Our City Centre'	Gain public feedback on plans for city centre including Marina Bay	URA Center
26 Aug – 26 Sept 2005	'Vibrant Global City, Our Home'	Showcase plans that will be realized in the heartlands and city centre	10 HDB towns, 4 days per location
7 – 31 Mar 2006	'City-in-a-garden'	Showcase Landscape Master Plan for Marina Bay developed by URA and the National Parks Board (NParks)	URA Center
14 May – 1 June 2007; 4 – 24 June 2007	'Designing Leisure – Inspirations from the Marina Bay Sands'	Showcase large scale model of the Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resorts and other design features of Marina Bay	URA Center & National Library Level 7 Promenade

Nevertheless, although land use planning in Singapore is often distanced from ordinary citizens, it is certainly not insular in a broader sense. On the contrary, Singapore's urban planners have long sought out ideas and input of experts from elsewhere – the first statutory master plan approved in 1958 was modeled after British new towns (Yuen, 2011) even as the bringing in of United Nations experts in 1961 saw the development of a ring concept plan similar to that in Holland (Chua, 1996). Clearly, learning from elsewhere is not a particularly new tradition for Singapore and should not be fetishized as such. As this thesis will show, this third characteristic of land use planning in Singapore is strikingly evident in the case of Marina Bay. From discursive acts of inter-referencing (Ong & Roy, 2011) to the courting of internationally renowned architects and planners, the development of Marina Bay was situated within much wider networks of knowledge production and circulation. How can we study these processes? Who are the actors that enable such knowledge to move? And perhaps more fundamentally, what understanding of the urban does this require? The next chapter moves on to elaborate answers to these questions.

[2] Information collated from *URA News Releases* (16 July 2003; 25 August 2005; 6 March 2006a; 3 May 2007)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

> The city's boundaries have become far too permeable and stretched, both geographically and socially, for it to be theorized as a whole. The city has no completeness, no centre, no fixed parts. Instead, it is an amalgam of often disjointed processes and social heterogeneity, a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms; always edging in new directions. (Amin & Thrift, 2002: 8)

In the introduction to a discussion series in *Geografiska Annaler*, Doreen Massey declared that '[t]hinking space relationally has become one of the theme-tunes of our times in geography' (2004: 3). Seven years later, that has not changed. As Jane M. Jacobs (2011) notes, relational thinking continues to challenge our conceptualization of the urban in very profound ways. As a result, the city of today's scholarly imaginaries has become irrevocably de-centered - from a self-contained, territorial urban, to relational assemblages stretched across space. Given such developments, it is certainly tempting, like Amin & Thrift (2002), to valorize the city as a somewhat vague, elusive being that always seems to evade our attempts to pin it down. Yet, one wonders if painting such ethereal pictures of the urban having 'no completeness, no centre, no fixed parts' is pushing it too far. After all, the city itself has not changed in any dramatic fashion; only our understanding of it has. It is the implications of the latter that I want to address in this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to lay a rigorous theoretical and conceptual foundation upon which this thesis will unfold. The first section begins by tracing the major theoretical advances that have undermined assumptions of the bounded city – networks, mobilities, and more recently, assemblages. After situating this study within this broader literature of a more-than-territorial urban, the second section moves on to consider a more specific concern of this study – the making of cities out of elsewheres. Drawing on the literature on travelling architecture, policy mobilities and intercity learning, I show how together they can help us make sense of the translocal (re)production of Marina Bay through a combined focus on *people*, *places* and *policies* on the move.

2.2. A more-than-territorial urban

2.2.1. *Networks, mobilities, assemblages*

Given that this study is built upon a relational understanding of the city – as an unbounded, de-centered and fundamentally translocal space, its starting point is therefore a decidedly post-structural one. The influence held by post-structuralism in geography has been far-reaching and has challenged what some would claim as being at the very heart of the discipline – theorizations of space. Trading long-held Cartesian notions of space as bounded and passive for more active and fluid imaginaries, post-structuralism argues that in order for us to understand what space is, we have to begin by understanding how space becomes (Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006). Post-structuralist understandings of space have indeed undergirded much of the movement towards conceptualizing a more-than-territorial urban. Eschewing methodological territorialism while avoiding the dangers of fetishizing a world of pure motion, urban scholars have begun to frame the territorialized peculiarities of the city in relation to processes occurring on wider geographical scales (Ward, 2010). In short, the city is now recognized as being simultaneously relational/territorial (McCann & Ward, 2010; 2011). Such an understanding of the urban has wide implications for how we carry out research on the city and has inspired much empirical exploration (see section 2.3). Yet, considering the extra-local connections of cities is not new. Within geography, notions of the bounded city have long been reworked through ideas of urban networks. Building on the seminal texts by Friedmann (1986) and Sassen (1991), urban scholars have detailed the ways in which certain cities play more important roles in coordinating major economic flows, a function that can be deduced from the number of advanced producer service firms and headquarters located within the city. Nevertheless, herein also lies a problem: despite the very study of cities as command and control centers necessitating greater attention to the flows that they coordinate, most studies have ended up analyzing only the cities themselves. As a result, much of the global/world city literature has veered towards comparative analyses of cities within vertical

hierarchies, rather than horizontal analyses of the connections between them (Smith, 2003a; 2003b; Taylor, 2004; Robinson, 2005). In other words, the city-as-territory remains.

This lack of relational analyses in urban studies is a lacuna that urgently needs to be addressed, and this is where newer approaches have stepped in. Two, in particular, are worth mentioning. The first is a seemingly provocative, novel agenda said to be sweeping across the social sciences. Initially (and controversially) dubbed the 'new mobilities paradigm' (Sheller & Urry, 2006), the mobilities lens issues a challenge to sedentarist ways of seeing the world as fixed and bounded. In contrast to seeing the world in stasis, the world is now understood as being in constant flux. Mobilities research today has however progressed significantly from an earlier era of fluidity fetishism. Scholars have also cautioned against historical amnesia that whitewashes entire disciplinary traditions as being 'a-mobile' (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 208) by arguing that movements today are invariably bound up with mobile narratives of the past – a past that is by no means static (Cresswell, 2010a). Nevertheless, upon stating these caveats, they also acknowledge its strengths. Writing in two progress reports later, Cresswell (2010b, 2011) points out that mobilities research today should be valued for its sensitivity towards the differentiated politics of mobility (Adey, 2004; 2009) and its acknowledgement of the intertwining of mobilities and moorings that serve to (dis)enable various forms of movements (Adey, 2006; Hannam *et al.*, 2006). Given its nuanced perspectives on worlds in motion, it is unsurprising that the influence of the mobilities literature has been far-reaching, not least of all in urban studies. On one level, the mobilities lens has encouraged a more critical enquiry into the diverse mobile experiences of urban residents both within the city (Latham & McCormack, 2004; Jensen, 2009; Merriman, 2009) as well as between multiple urban worlds (Smith, 2005; Yeoh, 2006). On another level (and of particular relevance to this study), it has called for research on specific urban locations to be complemented with attention to broader flows and connections (Smith, 2003a; 2003b; Yeoh *et al.*, 2004; Bunnell & Das, 2010). Interestingly, the agenda of the latter also happens to be highly resonant with a second perspective that has sought to de-center the urban: assemblage thinking.

The idea of the city as assemblage has been gaining popularity in urban studies. Effectively blurring the divisive categories of the social/material, the human/nonhuman and the global/local, assemblage connotes the coming together of diverse elements in emergent formations that are multiple rather than singular, heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. The relations holding these elements together are not fixed and may change over time, thus causing the assemblage to evolve alongside processes of disassembling and reassembling. Applying these principles to the urban, the city becomes a dynamic locale continually assembled out of the transnational flows of heterogeneous elements such as people, capital, material and knowledge. Such an approach has seen a steady growth of proponents in recent years with sustained debates in various journals – from a discussion series in *City* (Brenner, Madden & Wachsmuth, 2011; McFarlane, 2011c; 2011d, Farías, 2011) to a special issue in *Area* (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; McCann, 2011). While some have critiqued its wide-ranging applicability as reflective of its vague analytical parameters, others have spoken up in defense of its useful contributions. An edited book by Farías & Bender (2010) is a one such example of the latter. Going beyond calling for an empirical overhaul to consider intercity connectivities, they argue that the city itself is a fundamentally 'difficult and decentred object' (pp. 2) that necessitates such an epistemological reworking. Drawing predominantly on actor-network theory (ANT) to inform their notion of assemblage, they emphasize both the heterogeneous (non)human agents that produce hybridized urban spaces as well as the resultant emergent quality of the latter. Assemblage thinking is indeed very applicable to understanding a more-than-territorial urban. Yet, as I have elaborated on earlier with the mobilities literature, it is not the only lens through which the urban can be de-centered. While Jacobs (2011: 1) believes that there are 'irreconcilable grammars of relationality at work in contemporary urban geography', I prefer to concur with Sheller & Urry (2006: 14) that multiple theories are valuable in this 'postdiscipinary field' of mobile research. As such, rather than seeing mobilities and assemblage as self-contained, inward looking bodies of work, I wish to draw on them as complementary ways of understanding the urban. In what follows, I detail three reasons why such a synthesis would be valuable.

2.2.2. *A theoretical framework*

Firstly, bringing both mobilities and assemblage thinking together is theoretically congruent as they are both undergirded by a *relational ontology*. Even as mobilities understand places to be produced 'in and through movement' across space (Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2011: 13), assemblage similarly conceptualizes space as emerging from the convergence of diverse elements. Together, they present an effective framing of the city as produced out of distant visions and translocal ideas, all of which brings a significant challenge to approaches that perpetuate notions of the bounded city. In the existing literature, much work on urban transformation in Asian cities has focused on local resistance to top-down planning processes (Olds, 1995; Bunnell, 1999). In the context of urban politics, these territorialized struggles are of course highly relevant to the remaking of urban space and identity. However, spectacular landscapes such as Marina Bay do not only have impacts on the local urban fabric but also ramifications across much larger scales. Although urban scholars have long acknowledged that iconic architecture is created for global consumption (Sklair, 2006; 2010), few have considered how such flagship developments are also *produced* out of a myriad of translocal flows (although see Pow, 2002). By adopting a relational framework, I hope to explicitly consider the travels that have gone into *both* the production and consumption of urban space.

Secondly, both mobilities and assemblage appreciate cities as emerging from a *complex multiplicity* of heterogeneous rather than homogeneous flows that straddle the globe. While the mobilities literature has encouraged the exploration of a wide diversity of flows (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, 2006), assemblage thinking is more explicit in appreciating the city as what Massey (2005: 160) calls a 'throwntogetherness of nonhuman and human' due to its ANT antecedents. Bringing them together thus opens up research possibilities for following the diverse (non)human elements that go into the making of cities without necessarily prioritizing one over another. Yet, it is also important to be cautious in celebrating the inclusivity of assemblage thinking as the practicality and possibility of following all *actants* is questionable. One also wonders if *all actants* are equally important, or if some are

capable of greater agency due to disproportionate relations. With assemblage thinking, it is easy to get caught up with mapping the networks at the expense of interrogating its politics (Leitner & Miller, 2007). While a flatter world can still possesses heterogeneity from which politics can emerge (Marston, Jones III & Woodward, 2005), such an image can also be easily misconstrued as being apolitical. Hence, this is where we should draw on the mobilities literature's incessant caution against fluidity fetishism and the need to interrogate why some entities are more mobile than others.

Thirdly, both mobilities and assemblage affirm the urban as a *space of becoming*. Assemblage, in particular, argues that the city must be viewed as an emergent rather than resultant or a priori formation (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011). Such an understanding offers a considerable challenge to assumptions of cities being situated along linear pathways or vertical hierarchies. Instead, cities are no longer either exemplars or imitators but rather ones that possess the rights to inhabit coeval spaces and flourish along their own trajectories (Massey, 2005; Robinson, 2006). Yet, the ways in which the city is realized cannot only be determined by future hopes. Instead, to borrow a phrase from McFarlane (2011a: 25), the making of cities happens at the intersection 'between history and potential, or the actual and the possible'. In other words, it is necessary for us to juxtapose idealism about future urban possibilities with recognition of the urban histories that have gone into their making thus far. Once again, this is where we can temper the tendency to get ahead of ourselves through Cresswell's (2010a) idea of 'constellations of mobility' whereby urban mobile narratives (movements, representations, practices) across *both* space and time are taken into account.

In summary, bringing mobilities and assemblages together is useful as it considers in balance three dialectics: (1) the urban as simultaneously relational/territorial, (2) the urban as produced out of the coming together of human/nonhuman *actants*, and finally (3) the urban as possessing emergent future potentialities even as it continues to be shaped today by the past. Moving on, the next section will examine a more specific aspect of the city that is of concern in this study – the elsewhere-ness of urban landscapes as evident in the urban built form.

2.3. The elsewhere-ness of urban landscapes

2.3.1. *The travels of urban architecture*

The first body of literature that illustrates the elsewhere-ness of urban landscapes is that of travelling architecture. From work that looks at buildings in everyday urban life (Lees, 2001; McNeill, 2005) to radical critiques that highlight the power relations that produce and govern architectural form (Jones, 2009; Kaika, 2010), geographers have long been interested in the politics of the building as space. Yet, despite architecture itself being a mobile and networked practice (McNeill, 2009), the built environment has rarely been studied for its connections with places elsewhere. Nevertheless, this is starting to change. Growing interest in more-than-territorial approaches to the city alongside engagement with themes of movement/stasis is introducing new angles of research possibilities. Encouraged by liberalizing economic markets, proliferating transnational cultural flows, and the growing mobility of highly skilled workers, architecture is now said to travel (and be products of travels) in various ways (Guggenheim & Söderström, 2010). On the one hand, buildings are increasingly recognized as being *produced* out of a variety of constructive flows, from the embodied expertise of architects and engineers who converge on a building project (McNeill, 2009; Traganou & Mitrasinovic, 2009) to the non-human flows of material sourced from different places (Edensor, 2010). On the other hand, buildings also travel through *consumption* circuits as representations in various media (Bunnell, 1999; 2004; Grubbauer, 2010) as well as more abstractly as building types from the tall building to the bungalow (King, 1984; 1996; Jacobs, 2006). Yet, even as buildings travel, they rarely do so in coherent forms. Kuppinger (2010), for instance, notes that while the influx of Muslim migrants into the German city of Stuttgart has encouraged the development of mosques, these spaces are often made deliberately invisible due to their continued marginality as a community. Similarly, while global design firms may enable particular architectural styles to be replicated worldwide, local regulatory and cultural practices also influence their resultant material forms and symbolic meanings (Faulconbridge, 2009; Imrie & Street, 2009). As such, the globalization of architecture rarely

translates into homogenous designs. Instead, these travels are often transformative ones in which buildings evolve as they become emplaced in new environments.

The entrance of more fluid and relational imaginaries of architecture as described above forms much of the conceptual bedrock of this thesis. However, drawing on this body of work alone is not enough for two reasons. Firstly, much of the existing literature on travelling architecture has a tendency to study single buildings. Studying an entire landscape such as Marina Bay in which multiple architectural forms co-exist in one place is quite different, and would require a significant revising of approach. Secondly, despite architecture better described as a 'pluriverse' (Latour & Yaneva, 2008: 86) of multiple *actants* working together to make a building happen, many researchers have only emphasized the role of architects and architectural firms in developing the urban built form (see McNeill, 2005; Faulconbridge 2009; 2010). Such a focus, while usefully illuminating the ways in which architects collaborate over space and 'design-at-a-distance', can perpetuate problematic notions of the architect as a heroic 'personification of architecture' (Fallan, 2008: 91) who is somehow untouched by the power-laden struggles of the design world. In order to overcome these limitations, it is useful to engage another body of work that is also interested in the actors and uneven politics that produce urban space: the burgeoning literature on policy mobilities.

2.3.2. *Policy mobilities and urban knowledge circuits*

The past few years has seen an exponential growth of interest in policies on the move. Dealing with the circulation of (urban) models, expertise and ideas, policy mobilities researchers are interested in the practices and politics of circulating policy knowledge that go into the production of urban space (McCann, 2011; Peck, 2012). The study of how policies move between places is not new and is evident within the contemporary political science literature. Known more commonly as policy transfer (Stone, 1999), such research emerges from an interest in how policies from elsewhere are imported and implemented as well as the power relations that shape the transfer processes. Upon reading such approaches in the light

of developments in mobile thought, however, policy mobilities researchers have sought to develop a more critical agenda by asking at four crucial questions.

Firstly, policy mobilities is concerned with *who* mobilizes policy. In other words, who are the embodied agents (or nonhuman *actants*) that facilitate the movement of policies from one place to another? While much research on policy transfer has focused on the nation-state, policy mobilities researchers have argued that the urban is also an important scale at which policies are produced, mobilized and implemented (McCann, 2011). Key urban actors, be they individuals or institutions, thus become important nodes in facilitating this process. However, even as policy mobilities are not abstract 'desocialised movement[s]' (Cresswell, 2001: 1), neither are the actors that facilitate these movements faceless, 'optimizing, rational actor[s]' (Peck & Theodore, 2010: 776). Instead, these individuals are often members of larger epistemic communities who, in turn, frame the way they mobilize particular forms of knowledge. Their situated knowledges and practices must therefore be taken into account alongside the institutional fixities and structures within which they are embedded.

Secondly, given that actors do not act in vacuums, another question that needs to be asked concerns *where* policy is mobilized. Even as policy-making is an 'intensely and fundamentally local, grounded and territorial' process (McCann & Ward, 2010: 41), the movement of policy too is situated within particular embodied geographies and social spaces. As Ward (2011) points out, the process by which cities gain urban knowledge can involve either 'event-led policy tourism' in which cities invite expert individuals to share their knowhow, or 'visit-led policy tourism' that involves sending delegations on tours to study the best practices of other cities. In addition to the impersonal spaces of meeting rooms and convention halls, the more intimate environments created over lunch tables and during bus rides are also important. As Cook & Ward (2010: 253, emphasis original) demonstrate through their investigation into Manchester's hosting of the Commonwealth Games 2002, the ways in which cities learn from each other often involves people 'being *there*' to engage in face-to-face conversations with their counterparts. This personal connection is echoed by

Campbell (2009: 198) who notes that much of the learning that takes place is associated not only with the formal meetings but also informal ones made over 'meals, in meeting halls, or on buses'. Indeed, these visits and social interactions are not trivial ones but form rich, communicative sites where policy ideas begin to take shape and go places.

Thirdly, policy mobilities is interested in *what happens* when policy moves, or, how does policy change as it travels? Much of the policy transfer literature has been criticized for its problematic literalist take on 'transfer' that assumes policies to travel in coherent fashion along largely linear trajectories. Yet, the opposite is often true. As McFarlane (2011a) argues, the movement of knowledge between sites is better described as acts of translation. Translation refers to movements that are facilitated through various intermediaries be they material, spatial or embodied, and as a result, brings transformation to the very thing that moves. This is likewise evident in the mobility of policy. On one level, urban policies do not travel as enduring entities and often arrive at their intended destinations as 'policies already-in-transformation' (Peck & Theodore, 2010: 170). González (2010) for instance, illustrates how the Bilbao and Barcelona models of urban regeneration are not communicated to policy tourists using a standard script. Instead, 'geographically differentiated message[s]' (pp. 1408) are marketed: best practices of good urban design and public space to Europeans and North Americans, and models of public-private partnerships and decentralization to Latin Americans. Such a tailoring of presentations to different delegations not only reflects the malleability of the urban knowledge but also points to the politics of representation inherent in the mobilization of policies. On another level, policies are also shaped during the process of implementation. As such, while it is useful to identify urban prototypes such as the Vancouver Model of waterfront development that has been studied by Hong Kong and Dubai (Lowry & McCann, 2011) or the Singapore Model of urban planning (Chua, 2011), both practitioners and academics have acknowledged that such models cannot simply be cloned. Instead, the processes of adaptation, negotiation and even conflict are always present in the implementation of ideas from elsewhere into new geographical contexts.

Nevertheless, even as policies undergo transformative journeys through global knowledge circuits, not all policies travel at equal rates. Hence, we need to ask a fourth question: *how fast* does a particular policy travel? Even as globalization is associated with increased speeds and frequency of policy mobility, there is always a 'politics of pace' (Hubbard & Lilley, 2004: 275) where even as some things are speeding up, others are slowing down. Some policies have a tendency to travel more than others and to greater geographical extents, an illustrative example being the idea of the creative city. Dubbed a form of 'fast policy' by Peck (2005: 767), the model of the creative city has been travelling rapidly across cities worldwide, not least of all due to it being carried by the cult personality of Richard Florida. A thesis that hinges upon the argument that attracting and retaining the creative class is crucial to urban fortune, critics have attributed its popularity to its relatively painless implementation with promised deliverables. Yet, what is perhaps more alarming about its rapidity of travel is its power to justify disadvantaging neoliberal ideologies under a seemingly innocent guise of creativity. From its neglect of intra-urban inequality to its disregard of existing class structures, the creative city model is an example of why we should be concerned with and critical about the speeds at which policy travels. As such, rather than merely acknowledging that some policies travel faster than others, it is perhaps more useful to consider what all this means for developing a more progressive form of urban politics.

2.3.3. *Intercity learning: People, places and policies on the move*

What this section has done thus far is to review two bodies of literature that illustrate the elsewhere-ness of urban landscapes: (1) the travels of urban architecture that considers how mobility plays a role in the production and consumption of built form, and (2) policy mobilities that is concerned with the practices and politics of urban policies on the move. What then, allows us to bring them together into a coherent framework to apprehend a landscape such as Marina Bay? I believe the answer is in the concept of intercity learning. Colin McFarlane's work is of particular note in this area of study (see McFarlane, 2010; 2011a; 2011b). In his recently published monograph titled *Learning the City: Knowledge and*

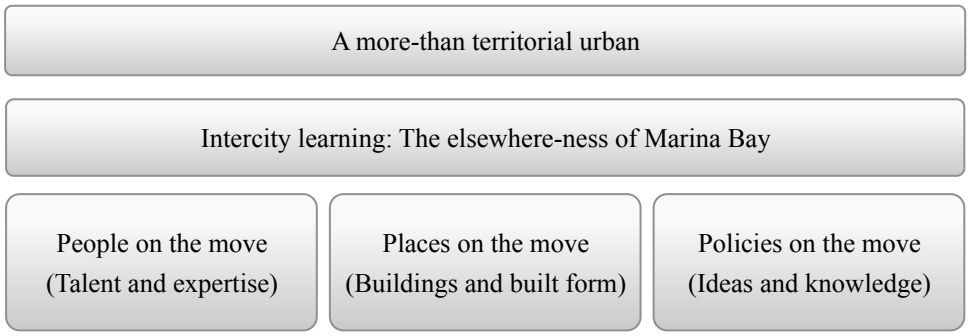
Translocal Assemblage, McFarlane (2011a: 16) argues that learning is 'more than just a set of mundane practical questions' but is instead 'central to the emergence, consolidation, contestation, and potential of urban worlds.' Employing the conceptual vocabularies of assemblage and ANT, he argues that learning is a performative, practice-based act that is situated within uneven power relations. As such, the ways in which cities learn from each other cannot be assumed to be a linear, mimetic act of transplanting rational knowledge. Rather, the very act of learning occurs through processes of translation, coordination and dwelling, all of which acts to make learning a social and highly contestable experience.

The conceptualization of learning put forth above may sound familiar, and if it does, it is because it shares many similar characteristics with the way scholars have framed the travels of architecture and policies – as differentiated, relational, emergent and politicized. Indeed, while not explicitly articulated, the very idea of learning can be said to undergird both bodies of literature. Intercity learning, I would argue, is one of the main reasons other than neoliberal flows of capital[3] why architectural styles and urban policies are rapidly circulating worldwide. It is therefore one of the main reasons why cities can be said to be products of elsewheres. As Campbell (2009: 33) has rightly noted, 'Many signs indicate that cities are searching for answers'. Indeed, today's post-industrial, globalized world has meant that cities need to be constantly engaged in reinvention and hence intercity learning. This is not to say that all cities are equally proactive when it comes to learning, and neither does it mean that all cities act as models for emulation. Rather, like the critique that has been launched against urban studies for its focus on paradigmatic examples (Robinson, 2005; Roy, 2009), cities too, have a tendency to learn from 'usual suspects' that have established themselves as exemplary models. For some, this process takes place on a discursive level known as inter-referencing as cities engage in 'practices of citation, allusion, aspiration, comparison and competition' (Roy & Ong, 2011: 17) with cities they wish to emulate. For others, going beyond the

[3] Mobile capital is another important element making up Marina Bay. According to figures published in *The Business Times Singapore* (21 August 2012), more than $25 billion of local and foreign equity has been invested in Marina Bay to date. However, given that economic flows have traditionally been given greater emphasis in the study of inter-city relations, this will not be the focus of this thesis.

representational to replicate a similar built form is preferred – the famed Bilbao effect of an iconic cultural landmark (González, 2004) and the 'Manhattan transfer' of the skyscraper (King, 1996) come to mind. For others still, more direct learning practices through policy tourism or the hiring of consultants from other cities are deemed the best way forward. The case study of Marina Bay in this thesis does, to a certain extent, involve all three approaches. It thus provides us with a useful situated site through which the practices and politics of intercity learning can be unpacked. Figure 3 below illustrates how this will be done.

Figure 3: Thesis framework



The above figure provides a visual representation of how this thesis has been framed. Theoretically, this thesis adopts a particular understanding of a more-than-territorial urban by bringing together mobilities and assemblage thinking. Conceptually, it draws on the literatures on travelling architecture and policy mobilities to understand how urban landscapes are produced out of the inter-related mobilities of *people* (talent and expertise), *places* (buildings and built form) and *policies* (ideas and knowledge). Given that Marina Bay is neither a single building nor a single policy idea but an agglomeration of both, melding both literatures is crucial for a holistic approach. Finally, as an overarching conceptual theme, the notion of intercity learning is utilized to help make sense of the diverse translocal strategies and practices employed by the Singapore state to develop Marina Bay into a global waterfront of distinction. How then do we go about studying people, places and policies on the move? What are some of the challenges involved in trying to apprehend a process that is often kept under wraps? The next chapter moves on to reflect upon such questions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

Having put forth a theoretical and conceptual framework for studying Marina Bay in the previous chapter, this third chapter now details the methodological approaches employed. As seen previously, the need to transcend presumptions of cities as bounded containers is a well-rehearsed argument today. Unfortunately, these theoretical musings have not been matched with a sustained consideration of how such research should be practiced (D'Andre, Ciolfi & Gray, 2011). As a result, while conducting this research, I often found myself grappling with a lack of specific methodological tools, if not a more unsettling sense of not knowing if I was embarking on multiple wild goose chases. Oftentimes, what seemed to be methodologically appropriate in theory fell apart as I navigated the power-laden fields, and had to be either abandoned or adapted. As such, what this chapter presents is not so much a successful approach that can be modeled after by future projects. Rather, it tells a first-hand story of discovering the need to be methodologically flexible when it comes to studying mobile urban landscapes like Marina Bay – a landscape which at first glance seems so concretely *there* but yet possesses an uncanny ability to elude.

3.2. Mobile methods

Before elaborating on the challenges faced in carrying out this study, it is useful to first sketch an overview of its methodological inspirations. Although this study's theoretical framing draws on both the mobilities literature and assemblage thinking, it has been the former that has been more active in considering issues of practice. Arguing that much of our existing methods deal 'poorly with the fleeting…the multiple…the non-casual, the chaotic, the complex' (Law & Urry, 2004: 403-4), mobilities proponents have called for the development of more appropriate methods to apprehend a world in motion. These approaches have since been dubbed 'mobile methods'. For Büscher & Urry (2009), mobile methods are based on two fundamental principles: firstly, that researchers will benefit from following mobile

entities, and secondly, as a result of this engagement, that researchers themselves will move from observer to participant to become a part of these movements. On the one hand, researchers are encouraged to study a range of movements such as (1) the *corporeal* travel of people, (2) the *physical* movement of objects, (3) the *imaginative* travel of places and people through print and visual media, (4) *virtual* travel enabled by technology such as Second Life, and finally (5) *communicative* travel through person-to person contact (Büscher, Urry & Witchger, 2011). On the other hand, different characteristics of mobility can also be considered, from how fast a person or thing is moving to the routes it takes (Cresswell, 2010a). Certainly, studying these diverse forms and facets of mobility require different methods. However, it is not my intention here to conduct a detailed review of these strategies. Instead, I wish to focus on two mobilities that are of particular relevance to my study of Marina Bay: the movement of *people* and the movement of *policies*.

The mobility of people within and across borders has long been an area of significant research within the social sciences. From space-time mapping of daily commutes to the transnational migration of individuals across continents, human mobility has hardly suffered a lack of scholarly attention. What mobile methods have encouraged, however, is a more ethnographic approach to studying people on the move. Rather than simply observing the movements of people, mobile methods encourage participation in movement as a process of research. Morris' (2004) method of 'walking with' his research subjects is a commonly cited approach, as are Kusenbach's (2003) 'walk along', Laurier's (2004) 'ride along' and Spinney's (2010) 'ride with' approach in studying London cyclists. Given that the corporeal body is an 'affective vehicle' (Sheller & Urry, 2006: 216) through which we understand places we journey through, these strategies allow researchers to gain a more in-depth understanding of what is often a fleeting and non-representational experience of moving. While this can no doubt be problematic given that the researcher's experience of moving can be very different, being on site to observe how people move and to experience that movement for oneself can be greatly beneficial.

In addition to the mobility of people, mobile methods have also been used to study non-human movements. The study of mobile policies, in particular, has been growing in popularity with a special issue on its methodological challenges recently published in *Environment & Planning A*. In this issue, Peck & Theodore (2012) build on Ian Cook's (2004) influential paper to propose an approach known as 'follow the policy' in which researchers journey with policies across globalizing networks and transnational spaces. Drawing on their experience of following two Latin American policy models on participatory budgeting (PB) and conditional case transfers (CCTs), a project known as 'policies without borders', they argue that the study of mobile policy models would be greatly enriched if researchers can physically traverse the multi-sited and multi-scalar fields of knowledge circulation. This need to travel with policies is echoed by McCann & Ward (2012) in the same issue. Proposing an approach of 'studying through' the sites and situations of policy making, they encourage researchers to actively follow and 'move *with*' (pp. 46, emphasis original) the key transfer agents who produce and circulate policy knowledge. In practice, this could range from attending trade conferences to observe how policy models are narrated, conducting interviews with prominent individuals, as well as analyzing the material used to promote particular policy models across different geographical markets. By focusing on the actors involved in mobilizing policy as well as their socio-spatial practices, researchers can then map out the movements and mutations of policies as they journey across space.

The travels of Marina Bay certainly involve both the movement of people and policies. However, as I have noted in the previous chapter, this study is not only interested in the mobilities of *people* (talent and expertise) and *policies* (ideas and knowledge), but also in the mobilities associated with *places* (buildings and built form). As seen above, much of the literature tends to focus on the first two. While McCann & Ward (2012: 47) have considered mobile places in studying policy assemblages, they adopt a more abstract and discursive conception of place, such as how certain place names get attached to particular policies – for example, the 'Barcelona model of urban regeneration' or the 'Baltimore waterfront model'.

Such an understanding differs from how this study conceptualizes places as mobile – in a more visual, material sense in which buildings and built forms circulate either as representations or through the replication of architectural styles. While contributors to *Re-shaping Cities* (Guggenheim & Söderström, 2010) have explored this issue empirically, little is said in that volume about the exact fieldwork strategies employed. Hence, given the paucity of methodological recommendations available, there remains a need to either innovate or adapt existing methodologies already being employed in the social sciences. In the next section, I reflect on the challenges involved in doing precisely that.

3.3. The travels of Marina Bay

3.3.1. *Tracing travels*

Approaching the urban as more-than-territorial involves the widening of our research sensibilities beyond the geographical boundaries of the material city. It thus requires methodologies with a sustained interest in mapping translocal flows, following travelling actors and tracing far-reaching effects as they radiate beyond the edges of the territorialized urban world. The mobile methods detailed above do fit such a criteria and thus form a useful foundation to build upon. Inspired by Burawoy *et al.*'s (2000: 4) idea of a global ethnography, my methodological approach aims to 'rethink the meaning of fieldwork, releasing it from solitary confinement, from being bound to a single place and time'. Taking the elsewhere-ness of Marina Bay as a starting point, I unpack the travels that have gone into the production of Marina Bay as well as to investigate if it too is travelling to places elsewhere. Yet before doing so, it is first necessarily to ask a more mundane and practical question: How can the travels of an urban landscape be mapped and followed? As described in Chapter One, Marina Bay is a waterfront development consisting of many spectacular buildings and attractions from the Singapore Flyer to Marina Bay Sands. It is, as a result, a landscape assembled out of multiple urban policy, planning and design ideas. Studying Marina Bay therefore raises questions as to which material sites should be studied and which ideas should be followed, or if it is indeed possible to study the landscape as a coherent whole. While I was certainly

tempted to delimit the boundaries of this study by concentrating only on selected sites, doing so at an early stage would be an artificial act of holding the world still that would tame its potential complexity (Massey, 2005). Hence, rather than preliminarily narrowing my research scope, I decided to open it up by tracing all the possible travels have gone into its (re)production. However, this in itself was challenging for at least two reasons.

Firstly, given that there was no publicly available timeline of Marina Bay's development, there were no official records I could refer to for information on the movement of people, places and policies that went into Marina Bay's development. Upon visiting the URA Resource Centre, I discovered that most of the planning documents on Marina Bay were under embargo. Only four reports, the earliest being 1989 and the latest 1997, were available for reference, all of which were fairly short and general in nature. Despite multiple attempts, URA also repeatedly denied my request to access more detailed reports. Upon playing all the possible cards I could think of – getting a letter of support from my advisor, snowballing through personal contacts within URA, tagging along a tour of Marina Bay where I knew URA officials would be on hand as guides (they remained tight-lipped), inviting URA officials to a roundtable on Marina Bay which my advisor and I organized (they declined the invitation), I soon realized that these strategies were getting me nowhere. Dismissing this as reflective of a reality where ordinary citizens never really participated in Marina Bay's development to begin with, I decided to try another tactic: piecing together fragmented bits of information from publicly available online sources. This involved detailed content analysis of URA news releases, URA in-house publications such as its bi-monthly magazine *Skyline*, as well as articles on Marina Bay in local newspapers accessed through the *LexisNexis* database. By organizing the information chronologically, I was then able to get a sense of how Marina Bay's development progressed as well as hints of the transnational strategies employed by URA. While certainly a very tedious process, this approach allowed me to establish a fairly credible timeline of Marina Bay's development. Having done so, I could then use the research questions formulated earlier to draw up a broad framework for my fieldwork (Table 4).

Table 4: Tracing travels

		Research questions	Information required	Potential data sources
Upstream	The travels that have gone into the making of Marina Bay	Which other cities and/or waterfronts did Singapore make reference to or learn from, either discursively through inter-referencing or through going on study tours?	Names of cities and/or waterfronts made referenced to in news releases on Marina Bay Places visited by URA officials, why those places were chosen, and nature of study tours	URA master plans of Marina Bay #Local newspaper articles sourced through *LexisNexis* URA news releases and URA in-house publication *Skyline* *Interviews with URA officials who have gone on study tours
		Who were the key actors or transfer agents involved in bringing ideas from elsewhere to Singapore? What happened to those ideas as they travelled to Singapore?	Strategies employed by URA to court global expertise in urban planning, policy and design (e.g. international design competitions, URA's International Panel of Experts or IPE) Processes by which ideas were adapted to Singapore	URA master plans of Marina Bay #Local newspaper articles sourced through *LexisNexis* URA news releases and URA in-house publication *Skyline* Interviews with individuals working for firms involved in Marina Bay's development and IPE members
Downstream	The travels of Marina Bay	How is Marina Bay being extended beyond Singapore through representations in various media?	Descriptions and discourses of Marina Bay circulating on a global platform among lay audiences	Foreign newspaper articles sourced through *LexisNexis* *Images of Marina Bay circulating on the internet
		Is there evidence of Marina Bay's success being referenced to or learnt from by cities elsewhere? How is the 'Marina Bay model', if any, being communicated?	Discourses on Marina Bay circulating globally among specialist audiences (e.g. urban planners, architects) Strategies employed by URA to raise the profile of Marina Bay (e.g. participation in international fairs, conducting of study tours)	Newspaper articles sourced through *LexisNexis* URA news releases and in-house publication *Skyline* *'Tag-alongs' or participation observation trips with study tours conducted by URA for visiting urban officials from other cities

* Sources that were not followed through
# *Channel News Asia*, *The Business Times Singapore*, *The Edge Singapore* and *The Straits Times*.

As seen above, my approach to Marina Bay employed a mix of qualitative methodologies: (1) semi-structured interviews with key urban actors, (2) participant observation or what I term 'tag-alongs' with groups on tours, as well as (3) content analysis

of local and foreign newspaper articles sourced through *LexisNexis*, an online news archive database. In spreading my data collection net far and wide, I hoped to be able trace both the upstream antecedents that have gone into the production of Marina Bay, as well as its downstream effects as it travels to places elsewhere. However, what is perhaps more interesting on hindsight is this: although what I was practicing was essentially a form of mobilities research, the methods that I eventually employed were rarely mobile in nature. The next section moves on to elaborate why this was so.

3.3.2. *Being still*

Mobilities research is often associated with being on the move. Much of the existing literature glorifies researchers who have the ways and means to travel with their research subjects. Being on the move with people is valorized as producing more in-depth understandings even as following policies is said to lead to 'surprising encounters, unexpected turns and unforeseen conclusions' (Peck & Theodore, 2012: 29). Charmed by their seductive language of possibilities, I too, wanted to do the same. Yet, my foray into researching on the move rarely came to fruition. Firstly, I did not always have access to mobility even when I wanted to. Influenced by much of the literature on policy mobilities and intercity learning that advocates multi-sited ethnography, I started out with plans to tag along study tours made by key urban actors for learning and knowledge exchange. While many of the study tours made by URA officials to other cities were conducted during the 1980s – 1990s, I was keen to tag along tours conducted by URA today for visiting officials that come to learn from the success of Marina Bay. This, I reasoned, would not only shed greater light on the nature of these study tours lacking in the existing literature, but also uncover how Marina Bay was being packaged and marketed differently to varied audiences. However, my efforts were in vain. URA officials that were willing to let me tag along with such tours claimed that none were being planned on the horizon. Officials that flatly refused to entertain my request sidestepped my probing questions on the nature of such tours with vague, one-lined answers. With a lack of information on study tours available in public domains, I had little choice but to abandon

this pursuit. Indeed, while tagging-along seemed appropriate and even exciting on paper, being able to move with an elite group of individuals through the landscape of Marina Bay is a privilege rather than a right. Clearly, it is not just the movements being studied that are situated within and reflective of unequal power geometries. Researchers too, can find themselves denied mobility in attempting to move with their research subjects.

Secondly, much of my work in tracing travels took place while I was physically immobile. Sourcing online for material on Marina Bay translated into days spent reading and compiling information. Identifying key urban actors and their positionalities within broader transnational practice communities meant hours typing their names and companies into the Google search engine in stalker-like fashion. Searching for evidence of how Marina Bay was travelling involved extended periods of time on *LexisNexis* methodically going through foreign newspapers written in English that made reference to Marina Bay. Even the interviewing of mobile actors who regularly traverse urban worlds took place in immobile spaces, from the creative chaos of the design studio strewn with half-built models and wood samples, to the luxurious lounge of the Ritz Carlton with waiters politely inquiring if we would like to try some finger food of the caviar variety. Yet, it is ironically these moments of being still that allowed me to uncover the travels of Marina Bay. While scholars have acknowledged that data collection on mobilities may not always take place on the move (D'Andre, Ciolfi & Gray, 2011), reading the impressive accounts of celebrated scholars such as Jamie Peck physically travelling with their research subjects across continents can lead one to wonder if being stationary is insufficient. Yet, as the next section will illustrate, this may be less an issue of inferior research design than the effects of one's relative positionality as a student researcher with limited contacts, funding and time.

3.3.3. *Reaching limits*

As with any research project, the positionality of the researcher can either open up possibilities or close them down. When I first started this study, I was keenly aware that my

status as a student researcher would pose certain limits. The nature of mobilities research, especially so in the field of mobile policies and the circulation of urban knowledge, is after all an inherently elitist and expensive one. Even as mobilities scholars are calling for greater ethnographic studies of policies on the move (Peck & Theodore, 2012; McCann & Ward, 2012), very few researchers have the funding and/or time to conduct multi-sited studies across different continents. Jamie Peck's 'policies without borders' project, for instance, while fascinating, is a form of mobilities research arguably conductible only by a select class of well-heeled and well-connected academics. Indeed, the very title of the project points not only to the mobility of the policies being studied but also of the researchers themselves who appear to travel with unfettered and luxurious ease. In contrast, as a student researcher with approximately 18 months to complete the study with limited funding, traipsing continents was simply not an option for me. Hence, rather than travelling with Marina Bay, I focused on tracing its travels while remaining in Singapore. This, however, was not an easy task. As I will go on to show, I often found myself reaching various methodological limits.

The first qualitative methodology I employed was semi-structured interviews with nine individuals who have contributed either to the upstream or downstream travels of Marina Bay (Table 5). Upstream individuals included foreign design professionals involved in the development of various attractions within Marina Bay (Gabriel C. and Brendon McNiven), high-profile urban actors courted for their expertise in urban policy and planning (Sir Peter Hall) as well as local urban officials who coordinated the transnational processes that went into the development of Marina Bay (Senior government official). Downstream, I interviewed tourist guides who have conducted tours of Marina Bay for foreign visitors (Khatijah S., Jane H., Johnston T.) alongside their professional trainer (Jean Wang), as well as individuals well versed in the strategies employed to market attractions within Marina Bay on a global scale (Fulvia Wong). Most of these interviews were semi-structured ones averaging an hour and made in person although email exchanges and phone conversations were at times necessary substitutes. All of the interviews were of a predominantly fact-finding nature in which I asked

my informants questions about their situatedness within larger transnational flows and practices – from being part of geographically dispersed design teams held together by communicative technology, to being ambassadors of Singapore helping to package and showcase Marina Bay to foreign tourists. Informed consent was gained from all individuals to publish their personal information and quotes in this thesis.

Table 5: List of interviews

	Individual	***Position***	***Involvement in Marina Bay***	***Date***	***Nature/Location***
Upstream	Gabriel C.	Landscape Architect	Involved in the design of Gardens by the Bay	11 April 2011	Semi-structured interview at Gardens by the Bay staging office
	Brendon McNiven	Principal engineer, Arup	Involved in the design of the Singapore Flyer, Helix Bridge and Marina Bay Sands Skypark	4 July, 14 Sept 2011	Email exchange (respondent based in Australia)
	Sir Peter Hall	Barlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration, University College London	Member of URA's International Panel of Experts	30 August 2011	Semi-structured interview at Ritz Carlton-Millennia, Singapore
	Senior government official	Deputy Director, Marina Bay Development Agency, URA	Heads Marina Bay's place managing agency	30 May 2011	Phone conversation
Downstream	Khatijah S., Jane H., Johnston T.	Licensed tourist guides, members of the Singapore Society of Tourist Guides (SSTC)	Conducted tours of Marina Bay on International Tourist Guide Day 2011	12 Mar 2011	Informal group interview at Marina Bay
	Jean Wang	SSTC Chairperson		8 April 2011	Semi-structured interview at SSTC office
	Fulvia Wong	Singapore Flyer Representative	Marketing of the Singapore Flyer	28 June 2011	Email exchange

It must be said that the individuals listed above formed a less comprehensive base than I had hoped. In attempting to gain informants including foreign architects and URA officials, I repeatedly found myself being limited my own positionality as a student. As Peck & Theodore (2012) note, mobile policy research very often involves both 'studying out' to foreign locations where one may have limited contacts, and 'studying up' where researchers

need to get past multiple gatekeepers in elite and powerful institutions. The problems I faced were mostly with the latter and this was especially so in attempting to gain access to individuals within the government statutory board of URA. Even after crossing multiple barriers of red tape, I was offered only the option of a phone conversation rather than a face-to-face interview, and even then did not manage to get any information that I could not have gained from public sources. Clearly, even as some scholars have argued that there is a need for a more post-structural, shifting notion of power in studying elites (Desmond, 2006; Smith, 2006), the frustrating reality of trying to engage with government technocrats in Singapore seems to suggest that such inequality cannot be simply theorized away.

In addition to employing interviews, a second method I utilized was participant observation or 'tag-alongs' (Table 6). The free public tour of Marina Bay on 12 March 2011 as part of International Tourist Guide Day allowed me to observe how Marina Bay was packaged for foreign audiences. By attending both the guides briefing and the tours four days later, I was able to gain a better idea of the situated knowledge base that the guides drew on to design their tour commentaries. However, while such tours were relatively easy to gain access to, this was not the case for study tours tailored for specialist audiences. As mentioned earlier, my initial plan of joining study tours conducted by URA had to be abandoned. Yet, this did not mean that I could not find alternative ways to gain information on such tours. Having missed the World Cities Summit held in Singapore in 2011 where such tours were regularly carried out (as I had yet to begin my candidature), an opportunity arose when I found out that a technical tour to Marina Barrage was being conducted as part of the Singapore International Water Week on 8 July 2011. This tour would include a boat ride around Marina Bay culminating in a guided tour of the Marina Bay City Gallery conducted by a URA official. Joining the tour and speaking briefly with this URA official after, I learnt that very similar tours were conducted for visiting planners and officials from other cities. As such, even though direct access to study tours were curtailed by gatekeepers of URA, it was still possible for me to gain insights into them albeit in a tangential, roundabout way.

Table 6: List of participant observation trips

	Date	***Event***	***Location***	***Purpose of visit***
1	8 Mar 2011	International Tourist Guide Day	Briefing for tourist guides at Singapore Tourism Board by Jean Wang, Chairperson of SSTC	Observed how Marina Bay is packaged and represented to tour participants
2	12 Mar 2011		'Making Dreams Come True', free public tours of Marina Bay	
3	8 July 2011	Singapore International Water Week	Technical tour to Marina Barrage for water experts	Observe what goes on during site visits

The final strategy I employed to trace travels was through the following of newspaper trails. Using the database *LexisNexis*, I amassed articles from foreign newspapers that referenced Marina Bay – be it the entire development more generally or particular attractions within it. While I was initially keen to explore how images of Marina Bay were circulating as what della Dora (2012) would call 'travelling landscape-objects', the disparate and diffused nature of their travels meant that I ended up with mostly anecdotal accounts. Pictures on Marina Bay uploaded on Flickr and Facebook for instance, while certainly evidence that the landscape is travelling through online media, did not seem to say much beyond that. On the other hand, following newspaper trails allowed me to map out the geographical reach of Marina Bay among lay audiences as well as to analyze how it was being represented overseas. Yet, while I could certainly conduct content and discourse analysis on these articles, what I could not do was gauge the reception of these articles by foreign readers. Unless the newspaper published responses to these articles, my following of Marina Bay reached a dead-end. Hence, while newspaper trails form a useful database for us to consider where (stories of) cities are travelling to, they are unable to reveal the effects of these travels in places elsewhere. To do so will require further research that will go beyond the scope of this study.

In summary, it is perhaps an understatement to say that my initial fieldwork plans for this study underwent many changes. What was originally planned to be more mobile, participatory and semi-ethnographic in nature ended up being a mostly immobile study of representations of Marina Bay largely removed from the actual spaces. Yet, this is perhaps not entirely unsurprising given the top-down nature of urban planning in Singapore where

detailed information is rarely released to public. My positionality as a student with limited contacts, funding and time only served to make an already tricky project even more difficult. However, like most research experiences, I also enjoyed serendipitous encounters – interviewing Sir Peter Hall who happened to be in Singapore for a meeting helped to shed crucial (and candid) light on the often unseen dealings of the IPE, even as the announcement late in my fieldwork process that Moshe Safdie was designing a building similar to Marina Bay Sands in Chongqing provided an excellent case study (see Chapter Six). All this certainly could not have been planned in advance. Indeed, while the initial stages of this study often felt fuzzy and undetermined, being open to possibilities unfolding as the months went by, while admittedly unnerving, is the reason why this thesis exists. In other words, rather than drawing boundaries around this study, I let the boundaries be drawn for me. And so it was that only when I allowed my loosely drawn fieldwork plans and the limits of my positionality to collide did the travels of Marina Bay finally begin to emerge…

4. VISIONS OF ELSEWHERE: IDENTIFYING GLOBAL MODELS

4.1. Overview

> If cities around the globe, including established ones like London and newcomers like Dubai, have the will to regenerate and renew its city, can we afford to stand still?
>
> - Singapore Minister for National Development, Mr Mah Bow Tan (*URA News Releases*, 12 November 2003)

The faces of cities today are constantly changing. Skyscrapers have transformed the skyline of central London while Dubai's Burj Kalifa soars above a city in crisis. In response, Singapore presents to the world Marina Bay. Framed as its 'answer to the increasing competition from cities like New York, London, Dubai, Shanghai and Hong Kong for the global pool of investment, talent and jobs' (*The Business Times Singapore*, 22 July 2005), this new spectacular landscape was planned to be immediately striking in visual grandeur and inherently attractive in economic opportunities. However, while it is easy to be captivated by the impressive materiality of this landscape, what is perhaps less thought about in a critical manner is how this landscape came to be. The development of Marina Bay, while highly state-driven, was by no means an inward looking process. On the contrary, recognizing the potential of this landscape to propel Singapore into a new era, the Singapore state turned to well-established global models of success. As this chapter will show, this was done through both discursive acts of inter-referencing (Ong & Roy, 2010) where government officials actively alluded to places elsewhere in their speeches, as well as more tangible practices of inter-city learning where state planners went on study trips to learn from other successful waterfronts. Drawing on a range of selected developments within Marina Bay, I illustrate how such visions of elsewhere permeated the development of Marina Bay from its very beginnings, thus establishing it as a fundamentally translocal landscape that should be studied for its relations to places elsewhere.

4.2. Looking abroad

4.2.1. *Referencing global models*

Marina Bay is often framed by the state today as a landscape unique to Singapore. Yet, this was not the case during the early days of its development. In one of its earliest mentions by the media, *The Straits Times* (11 July 1996) reported that Marina Bay would be 'modelled after…Fisherman's Wharf of San Francisco and the Sydney Harbour in Australia'. Two years later, then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced that there will be '26,000 high quality residential apartments in the new Downtown in Marina South, similar to those in Central Park and Battery Park in New York' (*The Straits Times*, 19 January 1998). When international consultancies were launched in the 2000s for various white sites (see Chapter Five), the competition brief for the waterfront promenade went as far as to stipulate that entries should 'develop Marina Bay into an international destination comparable to…Brisbane's South Bank, Sydney's Circular Quay and Darling Harbour, New York's Battery Park and Fukuoka, Japan' (URA, 2004). This deliberate benchmarking of Marina Bay against successful developments elsewhere was seen once again in the Gardens by the Bay project. Inspired by famous parks that have contributed to the aesthetic and economic value of global cities, Sherene Sng, Director of Knight Frank (a company overseeing the Gardens' commercial space), believes that the Gardens will be to Singapore what 'Central Park is to New York and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is to London' (*The Edge Singapore*, 26 January 2009). Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Gardens by the Bay, Dr Tan Wee Kiat, likewise echoes her thoughts:

> Every major city in the world needed a park - London has Hyde, Kensington, and St James Parks, and New York has its world-renowned Central Park. Soon, Singapore will be comparable as one of the leading cities not just of Asia but of the world. (*The Business Times Singapore*, 17 December 2011)

Arguing that the Gardens would complement the financial and housing development planned for the area, Dr Tan notes that the Gardens would help transform Marina Bay into a 'mini-Manhattan', thus allowing it to be positioned among the leading cities in the world. This is of course not the first time that Singapore has turned to the city of New York for

inspiration. This global city was also one of the models behind Marina Bay's signature skyline. As seen in the excerpt below from a 1992 plan for the Downtown Core, URA pledged careful attention to the layering of buildings in order to make that happen:

> The new skyline will, in time to come, make Singapore identifiable around the world just like the skylines of Hong Kong or New York, identify those cities. It will not…be merely a cluster of tall buildings. The grandeur of the tallest buildings will be emphasized through careful use of scale, by interspersing towers with low-rise and medium-rise buildings and parks and promenades. (URA, 1992: 34)

Given that Marina Bay will be 'both the first and last impression people have of Singapore' (URA, 1992: 10), its skyline was of paramount importance. Indeed, the potential for Marina Bay to become the face of Singapore was recognized early on. From the 1980s, Marina Bay was designated to be 'the Bay for Events and National Celebrations, ideally set against the majestic backdrop of the city' (URA, 1989b: 3), a vision that has carried through to today. Among other high-profile national and international events, a recently inculcated tradition at Marina Bay has been the annual countdown on New Year's Eve, one that was explicitly modeled after the notably successful countdowns in other global cities.

> Times Square – everybody in New York goes there. Trafalgar Square in London, everybody goes there. If you think of an international telecast of New Year's Eve around the world, which will be iconic place for such an event? We think Marina Bay as the potential.
>
> - Mr Michael Koh, URA Director of Urban Planning and Design (*The Business Times, Singapore*, 22 July 2005)

As Mr Koh notes, the countdown party at Marina Bay was inspired by New York and London in hopes of attaining an equally iconic status. Two years later, the succeeding URA Director of Urban Planning and Design, Ms Fun Siew Ling, reinforced this desire:

> It is our wish to see [the countdown] grow into an annual iconic event, placing Singapore alongside London, New York, Tokyo and all major cities, as the world bids farewell to one year and embraces the next. (*The Business Times Singapore*, 27 December 2007)

The media often frames the countdown as a heartwarming, local tradition. However, it is clear that this event is also a globally inspired one meant to position Singapore alongside other major cities. While it remains to be seen 'whether the Marina Bay festivities will one day be mentioned in the same breath as that in New York's Times Square' (*The Business Times Singapore*, 27 December, 2007), the 'live' coverage of the event has certainly enabled Marina Bay to travel widely as a visual representation of one of Asia's leading cities:

> [The countdown] will certainly define the Marina Bay as the iconic countdown venue for Singapore in future years. With the show going 'live' to more than 20 countries in the world, it will also imprint on the global consciousness that Singapore is one of Asia's leading and most beautiful cities.
>
> - Mr Kenneth Liang, Executive Vice President, Programming and Production, MediaCorp Channel 5 (*Channel News Asia*, 10 December 2008)

As it can be seen thus far, Marina Bay is very clearly a product of global inspirations. Visions of elsewhere – in particular, other global cities – have permeated not only its discursive framing in newspapers and government speeches but also in its organization of large-scale events at the bay. What we are seeing here therefore is a deliberate positioning of Singapore within the ranks of other global cities through the project of Marina Bay, thus allowing Singapore to participate 'vicariously…in the symbolic value of particular cities' (Ong & Roy, 2010: 18) which they deem worth of emulation. Interestingly, these acts of inter-referencing were not only conducted by Singapore but also by other cities that made reference to Marina Bay. As a result, Singapore was not only actively positioning itself among global models; its discursive positioning was also being continuously reinforced.

4.2.2. *Sharing the global spotlight*

At the official opening of the Marina Bay City Gallery and Waterfront Promenade in July 2010, Prime Minister (PM) Lee Hsien Loong likened Marina Bay to Singapore's version of the Shanghai Bund (*The Straits Times*, 19 July 2010). Noting that the Bund has come to define Shanghai, he expressed hopes that Marina Bay will do the same for Singapore. PM

Lee's reference to Shanghai was by no means unprecedented and was flagged two years earlier by URA planners in URA's in-house publication, *Skyline* (July-August, 2008):

> It is well known that waterfront business districts such as London's Canary Wharf and Shanghai's Pudong have come to signify urban progress and prosperity in recent years. They have raised the international profile of their respective cities while spurring growth and investment. For Singapore, the place is Marina Bay.

In the past few decades, waterfront developments have indeed become increasingly popular urban forms worldwide. As then-PM Goh noted in 1998, many major cities have developed new business districts by the water including that of the London Docklands and the new Bay area in Tokyo (*The Straits Times*, 19 January 1998). Singapore's benchmarking of itself against such successful examples is telling of its aspirations of joining the ranks of these globally recognized financial powerhouses. Its referencing of Canary Wharf is especially appropriate. As one of URA's international expert advisors, Sir Peter Hall, notes (interview, 30 August 2011), Canary Wharf is likely the only other waterfront capable of a real comparison with Marina Bay as it too was a greenfield site back in 1985. Interestingly, foreign newspapers also picked up on this reference point. *The Korea Herald* (16 September 2006), for instance, ran a flattering article on Marina Bay noting that its 'grand vision' was 'modeled on the successful Canary Wharf in London, Circular Quay in Sydney and the best parks of the United States'. Nearer the home front, *The Edge Malaysia* (4 July 2011) quoted a director at Raffles Quay Asset (which manages the Marina Bay Business Financial Centre) as describing it to be a 'unique waterfront development with no regional comparison, save for Shanghai's waterfront in China and Canary Wharf in England.' Clearly, Marina Bay is being recognized as having the potential of becoming one of the many successful waterfront business districts in the world. However, Singapore was not content to simply emulate these places; it wanted to do much better. Having a land area of 85ha and an estimated 2.82 million square meters of brand new office space, Marina Bay offers opportunities that Canary Wharf would not be able to match. As Minister Mah Bow Tan is keen to emphasize:

> [Marina Bay] will be more than twice the size of London's Canary Wharf and provide as much premium office space as Hong Kong's Central district. (*The Straits Times*, 29 February 2008)

Furthermore, unlike Canary Wharf's separation from the traditional financial district of The Square Mile, Marina Bay would be entirely integrated with the existing Central Business District of Raffles Place and Shenton Way in Singapore (*The Straits Times*, 15 November 2009). As URA Deputy Director of Urban Planning, Mr Andrew Fassam, puts it, 'It is not the old downtown and the new downtown. Marina Bay is planned as a seamless extension of the existing CBD' (*The Straits Times*, 15 November 2009). Indeed, by the late 2000s and especially after the launch of the Marina Bay brand, the use of the original catchphrase 'New Downtown at Marina Bay' was phased out and replaced by descriptors that implied a stitching of Marina Bay into the existing financial core. Quoted by the local news media while participating in Cityscape Dubai 2008, a high-profile international urban fair, a senior URA official describes what made this possible:

> Extensive long-term planning by the Singapore Government has placed us in an enviable position to seamlessly extend our existing business district. Marina Bay remains the centerpiece of Singapore's plans to become a global financial centre in the league of London's Canary Wharf.
>
> - Mr Marc Boey, URA General Manager of Land Sales International (*Middle East Company News Wire*, 6 October 2008)

Certainly, the amount of effort that has gone into Marina Bay has not gone unnoticed. In recent years, Marina Bay has also been increasingly lauded as a model of successful urban waterfront development (see Chapter Six). As Henry Steed, a jury panel member for the Gardens by the Bay International Design Competition notes:

> It's very rare for a city to give up that length of the waterfront to develop and turn into some kind of property. I don't know any other city that has gone quite that far. The only other city that I know is Shanghai…[Another] famous example is the Sydney Harbour; Sydney may be one of the best. In fact, Singapore is heading in the direction of that with the Integrated Resorts and the Flyer and all that, so it's very advanced in terms of planning. (*Channel News Asia*, 20 January 2006)

Marina Bay today is surely becoming the envy of many cities. However, Singapore's desire to position Marina Bay among the leading cities and waterfronts of the world did not remain merely discursive. Instead, as the next section illustrates, Singapore officials and planners were also actively travelling to learn from these cities firsthand through study tours.

4.3. Learning abroad

What is particularly striking (and indeed translocal) about Marina Bay's development is the emphasis that was placed on inter-city learning. As Sir Hall describes below (interview, 30 August 2011), the extensive networks of Singapore officials enabled overseas learning to take place very effectively and efficiently. Credit is given not only to their associations with particular organizations such as the Urban Land Institute (see Chapter Five) but also to their connections on the nation-state level:

> Sir Peter Hall: One of the most interesting features of Singapore is that there is very strong emphasis on learning from other cities. So they go on tours, they really do. Senior officials go on tours to these cities and they look very hard...They've been to Europe as well as American examples.
>
> Researcher: So do the local officials there take them on site visits?
>
> Sir Peter Hall: I don't know what happens actually. But I'm pretty certain that that is what does happen. They make contact with their opposite numbers, with their equivalents in these cities. And they are obviously able to do this partly through networks of which the Urban Land Institute is only one example. I suppose it does make it easier that Singapore is a city-state because their relationships can be at nation state level, so for example, the Singapore ambassador in Sweden will arrange and facilitate all this. I'm pretty certain that that's how it's done, and they do get the best possible official treatment in these places.

While it was difficult to glean any specific details on the nature of such study tours as much of it is classified as confidential information, a senior government official did confirm the fact that planners made learning trips to Baltimore, Sydney and Shanghai (Phone conversation, 30 May 2011). Evidence of such tours can also be seen in planning documents. The *Master Plan for the Urban Waterfronts at Marina Bay and Kallang Basin* (URA, 1989b)

for instance, contains a detailed analysis of three successful waterfronts: Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Sydney's Darling Harbor, as well as San Francisco's Pier 39 (Table 7):

Table 7: Learning from Baltimore, Sydney and San Francisco (URA, 1989b)

	Key learning points	**Application to Singapore**
Physical features	▪ Public open spaces to enhance water assets ▪ Low-rise scale of developments with emphasis on pedestrian movement	▪ Rescaling of the Bay through reclamation ▪ Continuous urban waterfront promenade, comprehensive pedestrian networks
Usage	▪ Public-oriented activities ▪ Atmosphere of leisure and recreation through development of marinas for motorized/sailing boats	▪ Good mix of uses to ensure 'round-the-clock-activities. ▪ Urban forested park at Marina South ▪ Water-based competitions
Linkage	▪ Water asset is connected to open spaces and key areas of interests through a well-planned and designed linkage system	▪ Accessibility enhanced with MRT Station ▪ Collyer Quay further reclaimed for pedestrian mall

As seen above in Table 4, Singapore has clearly conducted a careful analysis of all three waterfronts in order to adopt some of its best practices. Most of the suggestions drawn up above have been seen through to fulfillment. For instance, the proposed 'urban forested park at Marina South' has been translated today into Gardens by the Bay, even as the addition of two more MRT stations through the Circle Line Extension has greatly increased accessibility to the Marina Bay area. In the case of the rescaling of the bay, it was precisely such learning trips in the 1990s that prompted URA to reclaim more land at Marina South and Collyer Quay (*The Straits Times*, 18 August 2010). As then-CEO of URA Mrs Cheong Koon Hean recalls, this ensured that the bay would be just the right size (48ha) to be modeled after other successful waterfronts. However, while Mrs Cheong willingly spoke about how Singapore had actively learnt from other cities in developing Marina Bay, other government officials were more reluctant:

> No city will ever say that they were inspired by another city. There's no way you can replicate what you've learnt elsewhere. Marina Bay is a unique project that is made within, a project produced within Singapore. It's a seamless extension from the current city, something that you don't see anywhere else in the world.
>
> - Senior government official (Interview, 30 May 2011)

While insisting that Marina Bay was produced entirely within Singapore may be rather befuddling at first glance, this evasive attitude is an understandable one. The way URA has framed Marina Bay in recent years has focused predominantly on its uniqueness and ability to represent Singapore. Acknowledging that it was a product of ideas from elsewhere, while possibly strategic in the earlier days to present enticing visions of possibilities, would only serve to undercut its current rhetoric. Yet, while Marina Bay may be branded as being uniquely Singapore, attractions within the Bay continue to reflect how Singapore has gained inspiration from places elsewhere. For one, tourist guides regularly refer to the Singapore Flyer as 'our version of the London Eye' (Khatijah, tourist guide, participant observation, 12 March 2011) and the Esplanade as 'our version of the Sydney Opera House' (Just, tourist guide, participant observation, 12 March 2011). The Gardens by the Bay, too, is another tangible illustration of how Marina Bay is a product of ideas from elsewhere, not least of all due to its two conservatories that house exotic plant life from all over the world:

> In order to showcase different climates and their respective flora and fauna, the decision was made to build two glasshouses - the Flower Dome and Cloud Forest - to form a Conservatory Complex located in Bay South. The Flower Dome replicates the cool-dry climate of Mediterranean and semi-arid subtropical regions such as South Africa and parts of Europe like Spain and Italy, while the Cloud Forest replicates a cool-moist climate found in Tropical Montane regions between 1,000 and 3,500 metres above sea level. (*The Business Times Singapore*, 17 December 2011)

Dubbed 'Singapore's newest Eden', this 110ha development is a stunning horticultural vision that stands as a powerful visual metaphor of the global flows that have gone into the development of Marina Bay. As Gabriel, a landscape architect who has been working on this project explains (interview, 11 April 2011), officials from the National Parks Board (NParks) did an extensive amount of travelling to source for plants that would be suitable for these conservatories. Nevertheless, while the two domes at the Gardens may be the first of their kind in Singapore, the idea of building conservatories is certainly not new:

> Conservatories have existed since the 1700s, the 18-19th century in the UK. Usually, however, what we see is them housing tropical plants in a temperate country, such as in the Eden project in the UK.

> Here, it is reversed. We may not have gotten inspiration directly from that project but it is an idea that we use.
>
> - Gabriel (Interview, 11 April 2011)

The Gardens' conservatories are thus a product of adapting a temperate design into one suitable for a tropical environment. As Gabriel points out, this was inspired by the Eden project in Cornwall, UK, a site that was constructed in 2000 consisting of two conservatories as well as a research and educational facility. Interestingly, this was also one of the many projects that then-CEO of NParks, Dr Lawrence Leong, had visited while making study trips abroad (*Channel News Asia*, 16 February 2006). Clearly, Marina Bay has been inspired by visions of elsewhere both through looking abroad for discursive models of inspiration and more tangibly through the making of study trips abroad. Marina Bay may be more than the sum of its inspirations, but it cannot be denied that it is still an assemblage of ideas from elsewhere. Yet, how did these global inspirations and ideas arrive on the shores of Singapore? Who or what facilitated their travels? The next chapter moves on to provide some insights.

5. TALENT FROM ELSEWHERE: COURTING GLOBAL EXPERTISE

5.1. Overview

The previous chapter illustrated how Marina Bay was inspired by visions of elsewhere, a feature discernable in the numerous references made to other successful waterfronts as well as study trips made by URA officials. Singapore's aspirations of creating a waterfront of global status, however, did not only involve reaching out; it also involved reining in. Over the years, extensive effort went into the courting of global expertise – foreign individuals and firms who could translate those overseas visions into tangible, local realities. These strategies included tapping on a group of international urban experts, launching high-profile international consultancies and competitions to attract design talent, as well as employing firms that were behind similar projects elsewhere to replicate their success. In this chapter, I argue that these individuals and firms can be understood as transfer agents (McCann, 2010) that have helped to bring the best of the global to Singapore. Like urban actors that enable policies to travel beyond national and urban boundaries, these individuals and firms are situated within knowledge circuits of urban planning and design that straddle the globe, and are thus well placed to filter and channel relevant ideas from elsewhere to Singapore. In what follows, I first sketch out the three strategies employed by the Singapore government to court global expertise before moving on to examine more closely the influx of ideas that they enabled. Once again drawing on selected developments within the larger landscape of Marina Bay, I trace the routes taken by these ideas, the changes that they underwent as they travelled, as well as their relationships with the actors, spaces and networks that facilitated their journeys.

5.2. Transnational talent

5.2.1. *The International Panel of Experts (IPE)*

While the development of Marina Bay was a multi-agency effort by various government organizations, it was the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) that was most heavily involved in Marina Bay's development. The concept of courting global expertise is by no

means foreign to URA. In 2001, it set up an International Panel of Experts (IPE) to serve as an advisory panel to Singapore's urban planning. Formerly known as the International Panel of Architects and Urban Planners (IPAUP), the IPE consists of renowned individuals in urban planning and design (Table 8). Since its inaugural meeting in 2001, the IPE has convened four times, the most recent being from 24-27 October 2010.

Table 8: Members of the IPAUP/IPE over the years[4]

Country	Name	Position/Organization	Year
Australia	Professor Philip Cox	Director of The Cox Group Pte Ltd, Professor of Architecture at the University of New South Wales	2001-2006
	Mr Bob Deacon	General Manager of Darling Harbor	2007-2009
	*Mr Ché Wall	Director of Lend Lease's sustainability consulting group	2010-present
France	Mr Christian de Portzamparc	Architect and urbanist who opened his first office in 1971 and now has his own agency.	2001-2006
Japan	Professor Fuhimiko Maki	Principal of Tokyo-based architectural firm *Maki & Associates* since 1965	2001-2009
Spain	Professor Joan Busquets	Martin Bucksbaum Professor at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design	2001-2009
	*Mr Alfonso Vegara	President of Fundación Metropóli (international center of urban innovation and learning)	2010-present
United Kingdom (UK)	*Professor Sir Peter Hall	Professor of Planning and Regeneration at the Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning, University College London (UCL)	2001-present
United States (US)	*Mr Daniel A. Biederman	President of Biederman Redevelopment Ventures Corporation (BRV Corp)	2001-2006; 2010-present
	Mr Aaron Betsky	Director of Cincinnati Art Museum	2007-2009
	Ms Marilyn Taylor	Urban Design Partner at Skidmore Owings and Memill, New York	2007-present
	*Professor Hitoshi Abe	Professor and Chair of Architecture and Urban Design, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)	2010-present
	*Mr Jeremy Newsum	Chairman of the Urban Land Institute	2010-present
	*Mr Moshe Safdie	Founder and Principal of Moshe Safdie & Architects	2010-present

** Current members of the IPE for 2010-2012*

According to URA, the IPE was formed for the purposes of 'tapping on experts in the field of architecture and urban planning, to learn from international best practices, trends and development strategies of cities around the world, provide feedback on planning and urban design issues, and to identify ways to encourage and promote innovative architecture and

[4] Information collated from *URA News Releases* (25 February 2003) and *Skyline* (May-June 2007; Sept-Oct 2010)

urban design in Singapore' (*URA News Releases*, 25 February 2003). As seen above, the IPE consists of experts ranging from urban planner Joan Busquets who played a key role in developing Barcelona into a global model, to famous architects Christian Portzamparc and Moshe Safdie known for their iconic designs. While such a group shares some similarities with that of corporate firms and global architects elaborated in the literature on transnational communities of practice (see Coe & Bunnell, 2003; Falcounbridge, 2010), they do differ in two ways. Firstly, the IPE's composition is a notably fluid one, with each meeting seeing individuals joining or leaving the fold. It thus consists of a shifting, heterogeneous constellation of actors continually being (re)assembled, a phenomenon that allows for the constant renewal of ideas as new members are intended to bring with them fresh perspectives. Secondly, given that the IPE's purpose is to tap on a diversified rather than shared body of knowledge, IPE members are required to speak not only within but also across epistemic groups. Sir Peter Hall who has been with the IPE from its inauguration puts it this way:

> There's a very nice balanced representation between what I could call the architectural end of planning and regeneration, and the more strategic end…it's also a very well chosen group in terms of its geographical background - Europe, US, Australia - and very well balanced in terms of its kind of expertise, different people coming from different backgrounds, but far from exclusive. We can all talk each other's language. (Interview, 30 August 2011)

While one might question Sir Hall's description of the group as 'well-balanced' given its obvious dominance by Western experts (and in the current group, the presence of only one female), this coming together of what he calls 'different thought-waves' has been productive. While the IPE's role is not restricted to that of Marina Bay, this spectacular landscape has become a focal point in recent years. Copious hours have been spent discussing the finer details of Marina Bay, a process that often involved IPE members drawing on their experiences and knowledge of similar projects from other parts of the world (see section 5.3). The IPE thus functions as a crucial link between Singapore and the global community of urban planning, policy and design, with its members acting as mediating agents and mouthpieces in enabling ideas from elsewhere to travel to Singapore.

5.2.2. *International consultancies and competitions*

In addition to tapping on the IPE, a second strategy for courting global expertise has been the launching of international design competitions and consultancies for specific developments in Marina Bay. Today, a quick look at the key landmarks in Marina Bay reveals a global mosaic of architecturally foreign designs (Table 9), with at least four teams winning their development bid through such international design competitions (Table 10). These events often commence with a call for proposals that then go through a series of competitive stages in which teams are gradually eliminated. A panel of international and local design professionals usually serves as the jury that will assesses the merit of the entries, although in the case of the Marina Bay Integrated Resorts, a ministerial committee headed by then-Deputy Prime Minister Professor S Jayakumar was the final evaluator.

Table 9: Design firms involved in Marina Bay

Landmark	**Year completed**	**Design firms**	**Country***
#Esplanade Theatres on the Bay	2002	Michael Wilford & Partners	United Kingdom
		DP Architects	Singapore
Marina Barrage	2008	Team 3 Architects	Singapore
Singapore Flyer	2008	Kisho Kurokawa Architects & Associates	Japan
		DP Architects	Singapore
		Arup	Australia
The Sail	2008	NBBJ	United States
		Team Design Architects	Singapore
#Helix Bridge	2010	The Cox Group	Australia
		Arup	Australia
		Architects 61	Singapore
#Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resorts	2010	Safdie Architects	United States
		Aedas	United Kingdom
#Marina Bay Waterfront Promenade	2010	The Cox Group	Australia
		Architects 61	Singapore
#Gardens by the Bay	End 2011 (expected)	Grant Associates (Bay South)	United Kingdom
		Gustafson Porter (Bay East)	United Kingdom
Marina Bay Financial Centre	2013 (expected)	Kohn Pederson Fox	United States
		DCA Architects	Singapore
		Architects 61	Singapore

** Location of present day head office or original startup location*
 # Designed by winning team of international consultancy/competition

Table 10: Competitions/consultancies held for Marina Bay[5]

	Date launched	Competition/Consultancy	Nature of entries	Winning Team(s)
1	April 2004	International Design Consultancy for The Waterfront at the Downtown at Marina Bay (waterfront promenade + vehicular-pedestrian bridge)	36 entries from local and international firms	Design consortium of the Cox Group, Arup and Architects 61
2	November 2005	Request-For-Proposal (RFP) for the Marina Bay Integrated Resorts	4 formal proposals	Las Vegas Sands
3	January 2006	Gardens by the Bay International Design Competition (launched by NParks)	More than 70 entries by 170 firms from 24 countries	Grant Associates and Gustafson Porter

Design competitions and consultancies are common in the industry of urban planning and design, and it is not unusual for government agencies to launch them to attract high quality entries. Gabriel who is a landscape architect with one of the winning firms of the Gardens by the Bay competition notes:

> The very fact that NParks had an international competition meant that it was trying to attract ideas from an international crowd. These people would have different ideas and experiences coming from different parts of the world. They then borrow ideas off these designers and put them into their vision. (Interview, 11 April 2011)

In order to have a pool of international ideas to draw upon, however, NParks first had to ensure that its design competition would attract the best from around the world. Senior employees thus took to the skies to raise awareness abroad, with then-CEO Dr W.K. Tan meeting design firms in Osaka and Tokyo, Chief Operating Officer Mr C.C. Leong and team heading to New York, Boston, London and Sydney, and Director for Parks Development Mr M.T. Yeo visiting Munich, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Paris and Madrid (*The Straits Times*, 9 February 2006). The result of this interpersonal dimension combined with more general publicity strategies was an intensely fought competition that saw more than 70 entries from 170 firms across 24 countries. As Dr Tan noted halfway through the competition:

[5] Information collated from *URA News Releases* (6 March 2006b; 8 February 2007), National Parks Board (2005)

> Reputable firms have submitted bids from cities as far-flung as Dubai, Paris, Madrid, Munich, New York, San Francisco, Beijing, Tokyo and Sydney. I am particularly pleased with the strong showing of Singapore firms. All in all, the number and quality of submissions have exceeded our expectations, bringing together some of the best talents from the East and the West to help plan and shape Singapore's waterfront gardens. Singaporeans can expect a high quality project. (*National Parks Board News Releases*, 22 March 2006)

Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge that part of Singapore's success in attracting firms through such design competitions is due to perceptions of its strong standing in the global arena. Brendon McNiven, an engineer with the consultancy firm, Arup, has participated in many such competitions in Singapore, including the one for the Marina Bay waterfront that culminated in the team's winning design for the waterfront promenade and the Helix Bridge. Commenting on the usefulness of such competitions, McNiven notes that many architects find Singapore intrinsically attractive:

> International design competitions are a very good way of engendering the best ideas from around the world for application locally in a place. Singapore in particular has a great advantage in this respect as it is seen as an international city connecting many places and cultures. International architects are therefore interested to work there and to put time into competing for these competitions. By soliciting international input, the client and the project is exposed to much more diversity in terms of the potential solutions [to be] applied making a successful design outcome all the more likely. (Email communication, 18 September 2011)

Evidently, designing for the internationally recognized city of Singapore is an appealing venture for global architectural firms. This is more so for projects in Marina Bay that is poised to be the city-state's focal landscape. All three competitions were fiercely fought as organizers of the competitions and government officials rapidly (re)produced discourses of Marina Bay's iconic potential. The waterfront design competition was described by then-URA CEO Mrs Cheong Koon Hean as a 'significant milestone…[that would] move us closer to building a world-class destination' (*The Straits Times*, 12 April 2004), while then-National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan expressed hopes that the vehicular-pedestrian bridge would be iconic (*Channel News Asia*, 13 April 2004). A similar rhetoric of global-ness

was present in the Gardens by the Bay competition as NParks sought high-quality entries 'that will define Singapore as the world's premier tropical garden city' (National Parks Board, 2005). Similarly, for the Marina Bay Integrated Resorts, one of the reasons Las Vegas Sands scored was due to its unique architectural design deemed capable of creating a 'memorable image and destination attraction' for Singapore (*Singapore Tourism Board News Releases*, 26 May 2006). Clearly, despite these competitions appearing to be open to many ideas, in reality Singapore was quite specific about the kinds of designs it was looking for – ones that were conceptually and visually stunning enough to propel Singapore into the global arena.

5.2.3. *Strategic hiring of firms*

While the above two approaches have been successful in enabling Singapore to draw on global talent, the transfer of ideas is often most effectively carried out when specially chosen firms are hired by Singapore to replicate their overseas successes. After all, even in the case of the international design competitions, it was common for certain firms to receive a personal invitation or a phone call of encouragement to participate (Brendon McNiven, personal communication, 18 September 2011). Such a targeted approach of recruitment allowed statutory boards to ensure the participation of firms they were particularly interested in hearing from. In the case of the Singapore Flyer, this singling out of a desired firm was made even more explicit.

The Singapore Flyer is a giant observation wheel (GOW) located in Marina Bay. The first major attraction to become operational in the area, it stands at an impressive height of 165-meters atop a three-story terminal building and is currently the largest GOW in the world. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Yap, 2012), the Singapore Flyer did not appear out of an idea vacuum; it was in fact directly inspired by the success of the London Eye. Speaking at its 2005 groundbreaking ceremony, Managing Director of Singapore Flyer Pte Ltd, Peter Purcell, declared that 'The Singapore Flyer…will be Singapore's own recognizable icon in the minds of tourists, much like how the Eiffel Tower and *London Eye* have come to

symbolize France and England' (*Singapore Flyer Press Release*, 27 September 2005, emphasis added). The London Eye, however, was not merely a symbolic reference point for Singapore but also a physical model drawn upon during its construction. In an act that clearly illustrated its desire to replicate London's success, the developers of the Flyer conducted an almost wholesale borrowing of the expertise behind the London Eye by employing selected members of its engineering team that included Arup engineers, Brendon McNiven and Pat Dallard (Arup, 2008). As McNiven points out, the smooth transference of ideas from London to Singapore was facilitated by the fact that they could refer to 'company knowledge lying around…[such as] drawings and sketches' (email communication, 4 July 2011). By hiring the same team members, Singapore was able to ensure that the technical expertise behind the London Eye would be translated into the construction of the Singapore Flyer in a highly precise manner. Nevertheless, as with all transferences of ideas, the Singapore Flyer cannot be said to be an exact replica of its predecessor as ideas had to be adapted for a new context. The next section thus moves on to interrogate more closely the multilayered and transformative journeys taken by these ideas as they travelled to Singapore.

5.3. Transnational journeys

5.3.1. *Gathering ideas*

As talented individuals flocked to Singapore, they brought with them ideas and experiences from elsewhere. This coming together of ideas is perhaps best seen in the practices of the IPE. While ongoing communication between the IPE and URA is rare, meetings held once every two years allow both parties to interact – URA to seek feedback on its ongoing projects, and the IPE to share the latest developments happening in wider urban policy and planning circles and their applicability to Singapore. The convening of the IPE in Singapore thus creates a brief but intense space of learning and exchange. As Sir Peter Hall describes:

> As I was saying they bring us in every two years for intensive meetings. Normally we come in around this time [5pm], as that's when the flights come in. They pick us up in a bus the next morning

> and take us to Maxwell Road [where URA is] where we sit through a morning of intensive discussions and presentations, mostly on changes to the Concept Plan. We are seated around this table and behind us are many URA officials. This way we get to interact with other members of the IPE. After the morning meetings we normally go for lunch, either at Maxwell or somewhere else, where informal conversations continue over plenty of food and drinks. Our afternoons are normally spent on site visits to new developments alongside planners. So it's really a very intensive round of meetings each time we come. (Interview, 30 August 2011)

Furthermore, as IPE members gave feedback both through formal presentations and informal conversations over meals, they often consciously brought to discussions their extensive knowledge of waterfront developments in places elsewhere:

> Researcher: Did the IPE draw on examples of waterfronts in other cities in discussing Marina Bay?

> Peter Hall: Oh yes. Good and bad examples, I know I did. I know other members did. For instance I think all of us were influenced by the knowledge of Hong Kong (HK). At that time when we were talking about Marina Bay, there was a lot of discussion in HK about what was known as the Tae Ma Side that was West Kowloon, which I don't think frankly is very happy…it might come out right, but as you know its been long delayed. Then there's the London Docklands where there was many negative examples, well both negative and positive, but I think in many cases it could have been done rather better, in particular in terms of public access. Sydney scored very big because of some of the people in IPE, and of course I know Sydney, visited it several times…the Darling Harbor development I think is very interesting. So that loomed fairly large. (Interview, 30 August 2011)

Clearly, the ideas put forth by IPE members at these meetings are shaped by their professional and personal journeys, a selectiveness that is to a large extent determined by URA in forming the group. Sydney's Darling Harbor was likely highlighted due to its General Manager, Mr Bob Deacon, being on the IPE from 2007-2009 (see Table 8, pp. 48). Similarly, Hong Kong's waterfront was a popular example due to its familiarity among many members, not least of all Peter Hall who continues to be professionally engaged with Hong Kong up to today. From the perspective of the state, the proximity of Hong Kong to Singapore also leads it to be a favored city for comparison (and possibly competition):

> The world today is very interconnected so I think it is only natural that we have to understand what other cities are doing...to make sure that we are ahead of the competition. Pertaining to Hong Kong and Singapore, we are so close to each other and so there is bound to be some kind of comparison and learning going on. (Senior government official, phone communication, 30 May 2011)

While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely how these waterfronts have influenced the development of Marina Bay, as these meetings remain closed-door ones, it is clear that members of the IPE do not speak as independent voices devoid of social trajectories. Rather, these individuals are very much 'embodied members of [much larger] epistemic, expert and practices communities' (Peck & Theodore, 2010: 170), and thus inadvertently bring to their discussions their experiences and knowledge gained through those wider networks. Nevertheless, the coming together of global talent and ideas does not only occur in physical spaces such as in meeting rooms or around lunch tables, but also in virtual ones. With technological advances, it is possible (and increasingly common) for experts to be spatially dispersed and yet held together by communicative networks. For example, while the Gardens by the Bay project involved bringing in individual specialists from all over the world, not all members of the team had to be relocated to the actual construction site. As landscape architect Gabriel explains during an interview (11 April 2011):

> Gabriel: We have a lot of different people here…structural engineers and consultants from Britain, Singaporean engineers, and we also have Australian counterparts involved in the irrigation work. But some of our colleagues are based in the UK with the director coming in once a month.
>
> Researcher: How do you all manage to keep everyone equally updated?
>
> Gabriel: We have coordination sessions two to three times a week over the phone. We use Skype too, of course, and then there's email.
>
> Researcher: But isn't design a very visual thing? How do you communicate that over the phone?
>
> Gabriel: That's a very good question. What we normally do is send attachments of design plans via email, as PDFs, and our counterparts will then make comments on them, scan them, and send them back. [Takes out his iPad and shows me an example of such an attachment]

In addition to personal technological devices that allow individuals to stay connected with their spatially dispersed team such as Gabriel with his iPad, some firms also have company-specific communicative tools set up to facilitate the exchange of ideas. Arup, the global consultancy firm behind the Helix Bridge for example, has an internal network that allows employees to solicit advice from fellow employees that may be located elsewhere.

> At the most basic level, there is information and skills sharing through our internal networks so people are aware of the experiences on other bridges and what went into them. If there is a particular problem we run up against an engineer can post a question to the company's skills network before he goes home that day. It will then be circulated around the world to anyone who has signed up to that network (the bridge skills network for instance), and he will have many replies when he gets in the next morning either answering or suggesting approaches. - Brendon McNiven, Arup engineer (Email communication, 18 September 2011)

On top of its employee-run global helpdesk, Arup also has an intranet system that allows employees to link up with like-minded individuals to share ideas or extend invitations to cooperate in projects. As McNiven notes, it was this intranet system that facilitated the formation of the team behind the winning design of the Helix Bridge:

> We have another intranet system called 'Arup People' that very quickly lets you find people with relevant experience you can then talk to or invite over to assist you with. In the case of the bridge, the particular people and companies involved had worked together in similar competitions and projects, which is very important as the team dynamics and people relations are often what makes good design and problem solving happen. (Email communication, 18 September 2011)

Clearly, the travel of ideas from elsewhere to Singapore is a complex, multilayered process where the ongoing exchange of ideas takes place even prior to the arrival of these individuals to the shores of Singapore. Before members of the IPE meet with URA officials, their potential input is already being shaped by their extensive professional involvement with specific waterfronts elsewhere. Similarly, prior to their submission of polished proposals at design competitions, firms have already put in much effort in putting together the best possible

team with relevant experiences of similar projects. These designs are thus already in and of themselves an agglomeration of ideas sourced from many places worldwide, or to adopt a phrase of Peck & Theodore (2010: 170), they are designs 'already-in-transformation'. In other words, the ideas that are carried to Singapore by global talent are not on their maiden journeys. Rather, as well-worn travelers, these ideas have already seen the world. The final section now moves on to consider what happens when these ideas make landfall in Singapore.

5.3.2. *Implementing ideas*

As talented individuals brought ideas to Singapore, some of these ideas were gratifyingly put in place. Input by the IPE in particular was greatly valued. As Peter Hall describes:

> I know we had this meeting, and we talked very intensively about Marina Bay. We talked about the height and massing of the buildings, their relation to the subway, their relation to the highway system, and I remember that *we had an influence*, because at that point they were proposing only a single route around the outside, *which we said we didn't like*. We thought that there ought to be an express highway, a motorway that led right round or if necessary, underground...and also more of a boulevard approach so that the traffic coming into Marina Bay could be funneled in a boulevard, and that was done. *What's happened now is just exactly what we suggested*. (Interview, 30 August 2011, emphasis added)

While it is often large-scale projects such as the Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resorts that are attributed to foreign architects, the fact that talent from elsewhere has also influenced building heights to traffic routing is a lesser-known reality. Nevertheless, not all ideas put forth by the IPE are translated into reality. As Peter Hall notes:

> At that point [of the meeting], there was no mention of a casino. So we spent a long time talking about that side of Marina Bay, the sea side, as to how to handle it in urban design terms…and then of course it was completely blown away by the decision to put this vast casino concept there! I mean you've got an interesting concept, but its an entirely different concept to the one we spent a long time discussing! I think that's the only time in my experience where all the thinking and conceptual thinking was in effect totally altered by a major strategic decision that came up and just [bangs fist on palm] did that! (Interview, 30 August 2011)

Evidently, even as the input by members of the IPE undergo continuous negotiations at the discussion table, these ideas continue to undergo change and at times outright rejection as they are worked into URA's final plans. In this case, the sudden announcement of the Singapore government to build a casino effectively rendered their prior discussions completely irrelevant. That said, it is rare for input from global talent to face such dramatic dismissal. As recent work in policy mobilities points out, one of the main reason why policies (and ideas) change as they travel is because of the necessarily adaptive process of being re-embedded into new institutional environments (Peck & Theodore, 2010; McCann, 2011). As firms submitted proposals for design competitions, for example, many were aware that their designs (eventually) had to comply with local design regulations:

> Researcher: Many people imagine architects to have a lot of autonomy in their work. Is this true?
>
> Gabriel: [laughs] Well, there are always some things that we want when we design. But it is a collaborative process after all. We have to share the vision with our client. Architecture is different from the fine arts. An artist can do a painting according to what he [sic] likes. But for us, we have to sell it to the client. There's a shared vision in the end. Of course we are always pushing the boundaries of what we can do, but there are also government bodies and regulations that we have to comply with. They don't say what we can or cannot do, but they do specify things like railing heights and whatnot, which we have to follow. So the original concept is often transformed along the way. It takes about 3-5 years from concept to implementation. And this transformation is not necessarily a bad thing. (Interview, 11 April 2011)

The ease with which architects and their designs can travel is often governed by various fixities such as the regulatory processes of building codes (Imrie & Street, 2009). As landscape architect Gabriel points out through a comparison between architecture and the fine arts, architecture is very much a collaborative process that requires a greater willingness to adapt and even make changes along the way. This need for adaptation is likewise evident in the development of the Singapore Flyer. While the London Eye was its main inspiration, the Singapore Flyer was not simply a copy of its British predecessor. Instead, there was what Brendon McNiven calls an 'evolution of thinking' as Singapore sought to create an even

better attraction. On the one hand, Arup's engineers produced a two-dimensional truss design that was not only taller but also lighter (Allsop, Dallard & McNiven, 2008). On the other hand, renowned Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa and Singaporean firm DP Architects were engaged to design a terminal building with F&B and retail outlets, a feature that was not present in the London Eye's design as a stand-alone attraction. Commercial investors noted this improvement as well, and Lamine Guendil, a co-owner of a range of Italian dining outlets, was one of the first to bid for retail space for precisely this reason:

> Why do we want to go to the Singapore Flyer? It's because of the success of the London Eye…one of the biggest mistakes is that the London Eye did not have any retail or restaurant outlets in their concept. All the restaurants and bars that opened next to the London Eye were making very good business (*The Edge*, 13 August, 2007).

In addition to the conceptual improvement, the local context also meant that differences were inevitable. While the London Eye was erected over the Thames before being lifted upright, space constraints at Singapore's Marina Bay meant that the Flyer had to be constructed vertically and rotated upwards in sections (Allsop, Dallard & McNiven, 2008). In a nod to local customs, the Flyer was also designed in line with Chinese geomancy principles. The doubly prosperous number 28 featured in various forms, with the Flyer consisting of 28 capsules, with an interior space of $28m^2$, holding 28 passengers, and turning for 14 hours each day. Its spinning direction was also changed in a 6-figure sum overhaul after local geomancers deemed it detrimental to the city's Fengshui (*The Straits Times*, 9 August, 2008). Clearly, the development of Marina Bay, though largely architecturally foreign, is to a significant extent a product of adaptation and re-negotiations. Even as global talent brought ideas to Singapore, Singapore too, played a part in re-creating these ideas as it saw fit, thus affirming arguments in the existing literature that architecture and policies rarely travel in coherent forms. Nevertheless, the travels of Marina Bay do not end here with the physical landscape enabled by foreign hands. Rather, as the next chapter moves on to illustrate, this landscape itself is also beginning to travel to foreign lands as well.

6. JOURNEYS TO ELSEWHERE: SEEKING GLOBAL RECOGNITION

6.1. Overview

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, although Marina Bay was envisioned by local government agencies, much of its development progressed in negotiation with ideas brought in by global talent. Yet, Marina Bay is not only a product of inspirations from elsewhere (Chapter Four) and talent from elsewhere (Chapter Five), but is also a landscape that is beginning to travel in its own right. In this final empirical chapter, I argue that the travel of cities occurs within particular geographies and social spaces. Just as the seemingly fluid sphere of policy-making is an 'intensely and fundamentally local, grounded and territorial' process (McCann & Ward, 2010: 41), the ways in which cities raise their profile on the world stage also involves such local spaces of exchange. In its travels within specialist networks, these range from the convention halls of international urban fairs to the actual urban landscapes journeyed through by visiting urban officials on specially arranged study tours. Beyond this select group of individuals, cities are also travelling to more general audiences through international news media as well as tourism efforts that encourage reciprocal travel to these cities. Upon tracing these different journeys, this chapter then concludes by examining some of the (potential) impacts that Marina Bay's travels are having on places elsewhere.

6.2. Reaching global specialists

6.2.1. *International fairs*

While the marketing of Marina Bay at international fairs could not have been far from the minds of URA from its early days of development, the sudden emergence of the SARS pandemic in 2003 followed by an Asian economic crisis brought to the task a greater sense of urgency. In an interview with *The Straits Times* (18 August 2010), then-CEO of URA Mrs Cheong Koon Hean recounted how the economic downturn threatened 'to turn Marina Bay into an urban wasteland' as 'nobody wanted to invest in Singapore'. In the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, Mrs Cheong and her team embarked on what she termed a

'marketing blitz' to promote Marina Bay at major international fairs - from high-profile real estate forums to internationally renowned architectural exhibitions (Table 11).

Table 11: Participation in key international events[6]

Year	Date	Event	Location
2003	20-24 October	SWIFT Inter-Banking Operations Seminar (SIBOS)	Singapore
2004	19-21 March	Marche International des Professionals de L'Immoblier (MIPIM) Fair	Cannes, France
2005	25 February – 5 April	Inaugural Singapore Season Conference and Evening	London, UK
	8-11 March	MIPIM Fair	Cannes, France
2006	7 September – 19 November	10th Venice Biennale International Architectural Exhibition	Venice, Italy
	27-29 September	MIPIM Asia Fair	Hong Kong
	4-6 December	Cityscape Dubai	Dubai, UAE
	5-6 December	EXPO REAL ASIA	Macau
2007	13-16 March	MIPIM Fair	Cannes, France
	10-12 April	Cityscape Asia	Singapore
	16-18 October	Cityscape Dubai	Dubai, UAE
2010	28 June – 1 July 2010	World Cities Summit	Singapore
	30 July 2010	Shanghai World Exposition 2010	Pudong, Shanghai

The visual presence of URA at these events combined with generous incentives of greater site flexibility to potential investors allowed for an effective marketing campaign. While URA's participation in SIBOS 2003 and MIPIM 2004 was mainly to promote the Marina Bay Business Financial Centre (BFC), its involvement in subsequent fairs set out to showcase the entire landscape. The value of participating in these fairs to raise awareness overseas should not be underestimated. As URA is keen to emphasize, these fairs are premier events that attract prominent industry players from all over the world. MIPIM for example is one of the largest international real estate conferences and exhibitions held annually that regularly attracts up to 2000 exhibitors and over 16,000 delegates from 60 countries (*URA News Releases*, 3 March 2005). Similarly, Cityscape Dubai 2007 attracted 45,000 real-estate players from government authorities to leading architects (*Skyline*, Nov-Dec 2007), while

[6] Information collated from *Skyline* (Mar-Apr 2005; Sept-Oct 2006; Nov-Dec 2006; Jan-Feb 2007; Mar-Apr 2007; May-June 2007; Nov-Dec 2007; Jul-Aug 2010), *URA News Releases* (20 October 2003; 30 March 2005).

EXPO REAL ASIA 2007 brought together 700 key professionals in international property development and investment (*Skyline*, Jan-Feb 2007). Being present at these fairs thus gives URA opportunities to highlight Marina Bay to potential investors in ways that range from presentations to conversations over meals. For example, even as Mr Mark Goh, Deputy Director of MBDA conducted talks for large audiences on Marina Bay at EXPO REAL ASIA 2006 (*Skyline*, Jan-Feb 2007), then-Minister for National Development, Mr Mah Bow Tan took a different approach by hosting a dinner reception for 30 key real-estate players at MIPIM 2007 (*Skyline*, Mar-Apr 2007). Furthermore, these high-profile fairs also often attract a lot of attention from the local media. The *Hong Kong Economic Journal* and *Sing Tao Daily*, for example, carried positive stories of Singapore's participation in EXPO REAL ASIA held in Hong Kong in 2007 (*Skyline*, Jan-Feb 2007), while Singapore's participation in Cityscape Dubai likewise gained good reviews in the local dailies (*Skyline*, Nov-Dec 2007). Aided by these media reports, the story of Marina Bay could now travel beyond the exclusive group of event participants to the wider community in the host country.

In addition to sending high ranking officials as spokespersons, URA also set up booths that consisted of large-scaled models and informative posters. These booths (or Singapore Pavilions as they are frequently called) present a highly visual representation of Marina Bay to foreign audiences. While variations are inevitable as 'each year the space and configuration may change', URA is still able to remain consistent in its marketing message by providing 'standard information about Singapore to visitors' built around the Marina Bay live-work-play brand (Interview, senior government official, 30 May 2011). According to URA, these booths have been extremely successful. URA's booth showcasing the Marina Bay BFC in MIPIM 2004 was reported to have attracted 500-600 delegates (*URA News Releases*, 3 March 2005), even as honored guests such as HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai who paid visits to the Singapore Pavilion at Cityscape Dubai 2007 were said to be notably impressed (*Skyline*, Nov-Dec 2007). Certainly,

as the photographs[7] in Figure 4 below illustrate, these booths serve as important spaces in which one-on-one interaction with foreign counterparts take place, thus effectively acting as entry points for Marina Bay to begin new routes of travel to other cities.

Figure 4: Singapore booths at international fairs

Visitors to the Singapore booth at MIPIM 2005 and MIPIM 2007

Visitors to the Singapore booth at Cityscape Asia 2007 & Cityscape Dubai 2007

Nevertheless, the profiling of Marina Bay at such international fairs removed from the physical landscape can only do so much. The most effective methods by which cities learn from each other after all often involve individuals 'being *there*' (Cook & Ward, 2010: 25, emphasis original) to engage with the landscape itself. The next section moves on to outline how URA has played host to numerous visitors from other cities who come to experience first-hand the landscape of Marina Bay.

[7] Photographs sourced from *Skyline* (Mar-Apr 2005; Mar-Apr 2007; May-June, 2007; Nov-Dec, 2007)

6.2.2. *Local study tours*

Study tours to Marina Bay are often held in conjunction with international events held in Singapore (Table 12). In some cases, these tours may be only to specific developments in Marina Bay as part of technical conferences. Arup, the engineering consultancy firm behind the Singapore Flyer, for example, was invited to share its know-how at the 3rd IStructE Asia Pacific Forum held on the 2-3 November 2007 in Singapore, a regional conference for structural engineers that included a site visit to the Flyer itself (Arup, 2008). In other cases, and more so for conferences relating to urban planning and design, the tours conducted often incorporate the broader landscape. The Urban Land Institute's (ULI) International Waterfront Development Conference 2005, for example, was convened in collaboration with URA to allow cities to share lessons learnt from best practice waterfront developments (ULI, 2011). Multiple opportunities were available during the conference for Singapore to highlight Marina Bay's waterfront development to foreign delegates - from the opening address delivered by then-Singapore Minister for National Development Mr Mah Bow Tan, to lectures, debates and dinner receptions hosted by then-CEO of URA Mrs Cheong who was also a keynote speaker. At the same time, given that the 2005 conference was held in Singapore, delegates could not only listen to talks about Marina Bay but could also experience it for themselves through an optional mobile workshop organized by URA on the second day of the conference. Commencing with a presentation at the URA Centre, delegates were taken on a four-hour tour of key waterfront sites that included The Fullerton, The Esplanade and the Singapore River. By participating in these tours, delegates were then able to combine the information gained during the conference with experiential knowledge to be carried back to their own countries.

Table 12: Study tours held in conjunction with international events in Singapore[8]

Date	Event	Study tours	Organizers
4 October 2005	ULI International Waterfront Development Conference	Half-day tour including visits to The Fullerton and The Esplanade.	ULI, URA
2-3 November 2007	3rd IStructE Asia Pacific Forum	Site visit to the Singapore Flyer	IStructE
25-26 July 2008	Conference on Iconic Structures in Singapore & Asia	Site visits to Gardens by the Bay, Helix Bridge, Marina Bay Sands, Marina Barrage	Institute of Engineers Singapore (IES) and IStructE joint committee
15 November 2009	APEC Leaders Meeting 2009	Trip to the Singapore Flyer hosted by URA CEO Mrs Cheong	APEC organizing committee, URA
28 June – 1 July 2010	World Cities Summit 2010	Learning journeys to Marina Bay, Singapore Flyer, Marina Barrage	Multi-agency effort
13-14 December 2010	Conference on Structural Marvels	Site visits to Marina Bay Sands, The Sail	IES and IStructE joint committee
4-8 July 2011	Singapore International Water Week (SIWW) 2011	Technical tour to Marina Barrage, visit to Marina Bay City Gallery	Ministry of ENV, PUB

While technical study tours are useful for events directly related to Marina Bay, more general ones are also often incorporated into the proceedings of tangential events to capitalize on the presence of a large or prominent group of foreigners. For example, the presence of the spouses of APEC leaders in Singapore in 2009 prompted the putting together of a Leaders' Spouse Program that included a flight on the Singapore Flyer (*Skyline*, Nov-Dec 2009). Then-URA CEO Mrs Cheong was also personally on hand to provide information on the latest developments going on in Marina Bay that could be viewed from the Flyer cabin – from the Gardens by the Bay project to the Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resorts. While these individuals may not be planners themselves, their prominent positions in their home countries mean that their impressions of Singapore would be influential. In a similar fashion, the presence of over 13,500 global water experts from 99 countries at the SIWW 2011 made it an ideal platform for publicizing Marina Bay (SIWW, 2007). However, rather than simply conducting a tour to the Barrage itself, a site of much interest to water experts, the organizers of SIWW collaborated with URA to develop a more comprehensive showcasing of Marina

[8] Information collated from IES (2008; 2010), SIWW (2007), Arup (2008), *Skyline* (Nov-Dec 2009), ULI (2011) and World Cities Summit (2011). Note that this is not a comprehensive list.

Bay, one which I got to experience myself as I joined the delegates for one of the tours entitled 'Water Icons in the City'.

Leaving Suntec Convention Centre at 9:00am on 8 July 2011, our short bus journey to the Barrage was an informative one as tourist guide Ms Jean Wang provided a mobile commentary on the various developments within Marina Bay. Upon arrival, we were ushered into a seminar room for a presentation on water separation technology before being taken to view prototypes. Tea was served soon after followed by a tour of the Sustainable Singapore Gallery and a brief visit to the green roof of the Barrage. Here, many delegates scrambled to photograph the Singapore skyline, not least of all the iconic Marina Bay Sands (Figure 5). Next, we were taken on a leisurely boat ride from the Barrage to the Marina Bay City Gallery, a journey that once again saw many delegates taking pictures of the gleaming landscape under the midday sun. At this final stop, Ms Adeline Seet, Executive Place Manager from URA, delivered a fifteen-minute presentation of Marina Bay as delegates gathered around the large-scaled model to watch as she pointed out key landmarks on the model using a laser pointer (Figure 6). Judging from my conversations with them, many delegates felt that the tour had given them greater insights into this up-and-coming landscape of Singapore. One delegate from the Netherlands shared that the organizers of SIWW had also given out limited free tickets to the Marina Bay Sands Skypark - an observation deck from which one can get a birds-eye view of the entire landscape. Indeed, while many of the delegates were not in Singapore to learn about Marina Bay, their exposure to the landscape both through the organized tour and personal sightseeing caused them to become unwitting transfer agents who will enable the stories of Marina Bay to be carried back to their home countries.

Figure 5: SIWW conference delegate photographing MBS

Figure 6: Presentation by URA official at Marina Bay City Gallery

Finally, in addition to study tours in conjunction with conferences, foreign teams have also come to Singapore for the specific purposes of learning from individual developments within Marina Bay. This is especially common in the case of the Singapore Flyer, whose travels through specialist knowledge networks began while it was still under construction with 50 privileged engineering students from the Norwegian University of Technology and Science being taken on a site visit (*Channel News Asia*, 5 April, 2006). As Arup engineer Brendon McNiven notes (email communication, 4 July 2011), the Singapore Flyer's unique mixed-use development is the main reason why many teams plan such visits:

> People visit to look at the capsule layout and experience, and also the operations - the way it interacts with the terminal buildings at the base - all of which is very different to the London Eye.

While the exact number of site visits hosted by the Flyer is not known, a Singapore Flyer Representative reported that a team from Caesars Entertainment Corp. seeking to develop an observation wheel in Las Vegas had recently visited the Flyer for a flight, a facilities tour and a sharing session on its sales and marketing experience (Fulvia Wong, email communication, 28 July 2011). Possibly due to this visit, an article in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (2 July, 2010) quoted the corporation's vice president of public policy and communications as saying that the wheel would be 'just like…the Singapore Flyer' in its spectacular nature. Nevertheless, while the developments in Marina Bay such as the Singapore Flyer is no doubt attracting much attention from the global community, its location within Southeast Asia does make it more expensive for counterparts from Western cities to travel to. As Peter Hall notes in an interview (30 August 2011), such long distances are a considerable deterrence:

> Researcher: Do you think Marina Bay will become a model of waterfront development that other cities will want to learn from?
>
> Peter Hall: Oh yes it will. But I have to say that long haul travel is still to some degree a kind of impediment. Distance is still a deterrent. In the UK you are looking at a one-hour flight or three hour train journey to Amsterdam. Compare that with a twelve and a half hour journey to Singapore - even if you were to combine it with tours to Hong Kong and Australia – it's going to be a lot more expensive and a lot more time consuming for busy professionals. The kinds of tours we organize are typically two days, three days, and then you're back home, or in your office. Asking people to leave for two weeks and spend several thousand pounds or dollars is a different deal. So, I think the amount of interaction between Europe and the US and here…is always going to be more difficult, until we maybe crack the problem of low-cost air travel!

Interestingly, while waterfronts in Western cities exerted significant influence as models of emulation and case studies in Marina Bay's development (Chapters Four and Five), these learning trajectories are not always reciprocal ones. Nevertheless, it is questionable if cost is the main reason for such a pattern given that many of these hyper-mobile professionals often travel with luxurious ease. What is more likely a driving factor is the continued presumption of urban hierarchies whereby Singapore is deemed to fall lower

down the list. Nevertheless, given Singapore's strong standing in this part of the world coupled with past trajectories of knowledge exchange, it is likely that Marina Bay will begin to circulate rapidly through inter-Asia networks, if it has not already:

> Researcher: What about within Asia then?
>
> Peter Hall: Oh definitely. Within Asia you're bound to see this I'm sure. I don't know what's happening, but I would be very surprised if you're not seeing lots of Chinese mainland planners coming here, including students, because after all in many ways, Singapore was a model for a lot of the great change in China - think of the development in Suzhou – so you are likely to get that kind of traffic on a very big scale. So to that degree, I believe Singapore can and will act as a model especially for Chinese planners.

While URA was unwilling to disclose information on study tours it has conducted, evidence from elsewhere suggests that Hong Kong has sent teams to Singapore on fact-finding missions. As part of its ongoing efforts to improve the Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong government established the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee (HEC) on 1 May 2004 to serve as an advisory panel to the Hong Kong government (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2009). Within the HEC, a smaller group known as the Task Group on Management Model for the Harbourfront (TGMMH) was assigned the role of making trips to both local and overseas waterfront developments in order to compile best practices that could be adopted by Hong Kong. Among the nine[9] overseas waterfronts visited by the TGMMH and the Secretary for Development, the only Asian city on the list was that of Singapore.

The delegation that travelled to Singapore and Sydney comprised of TGMMH members as well as government representatives. Their aim was explicitly one of emulation and application, with the delegation looking to gain 'an in-depth understanding of the respective institutional arrangements of harbourfront management adopted by Singapore and Sydney, with the objective to inform the Task Group on its task of formulating a management

[9] TGMMH visited seven cities in three batches: Cardiff, London, Liverpool in the UK (6-7 November 2008) Singapore and Sydney (16-20 February 2009), and finally San Francisco and Vancouver (11-17 April 2009). The Secretary for Development followed up with visits to Wellington and Auckland from 4-7 May 2010 (Hong Kong Harborfront Commission, 2010).

model' (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2009: 1). Unsurprisingly, their itinerary was a packed one filled with multiple opportunities to meet with waterfront management authorities in the respective host cities – URA and MBDA in Singapore, and the Sydney Harbor Foreshore Authority in Sydney (Table 13).

Table 13: Itinerary of TGMMH study trips to Singapore and Sydney[10]

Date	Time	Organization/Place visited
SINGAPORE		
16 Feb 10	16:30-18:00	Urban Redevelopment Authority
17 Feb 10	10:00-12:30	Singapore Cruise Centre
	15:00-17:00	Singapore Harbour Cruise onboard 'The Imperial Cheng Ho' vessel
	17:30-19:00	Riverside Walk – The Esplanade Mall & Park, Boat Quay & Clarke Quay
18 Feb 10	11:00-12:30	Marina Bay Development Agency
	14:30-17:00	National Parks Board, Gardens by the Bay & East Coast Park
SYDNEY		
19 Feb 10	13:00-17:00	Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and tour to Darling Harbor and Barangaroo Project, the Rocks, and Circular Quay
20 Feb 10	10:00-12:00	Harbour Walk – Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge
	12:30-14:00	Sydney Ports Corporation
	14:30-16:00	NSW Maritime and Woolloomooloo Wharf
	16:30-17:00	Sydney Fish Market

Upon returning to Hong Kong, the team produced a detailed report that drew out specific lessons from Singapore and Sydney that could be applied to Hong Kong. Noting that 'similarities of the site and plans are remarkable' (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2009: 15), Hong Kong's Kai Tak development was singled out for a detailed comparison with Singapore's Marina Bay. Believing that Kai Tak has great potential to become as successful as its Singapore counterpart, the delegation strongly advised that a single government agency be put in place to manage it, a move that they hope will enable a more seamless development process. In addition, the delegation went as far as to suggest that the organizational chart of URA 'can be used as a template (albeit with fewer headcounts) for the development of Kai Tak' (19). This need for a centralized, top-down approach to the development of the Hong

[10] Adapted from Hong Kong Development Bureau (2009) pp. 23.

Kong waterfront was echoed again in *Harbour of Life*, a book published by the HEC detailing its work for the past 6 years including reflections on its overseas learning journeys. In it, TGMMH member Dr Sujata Govada who was part of the delegation to Singapore noted that the main reason why Marina Bay succeeded is because of its 'strong vision and leadership' (HEC, 2010: 52). In comparison, Hong Kong's waterfront development has been described as 'piecemeal' and 'lack[ing] coherence' (pp. 19), not least of all due to conflicts among stakeholders and bureaucracy within multiple government departments. While replicating Singapore's framework of institutional governance will be highly difficult, it is clear that Marina Bay is certainly travelling rapidly as a model of inspiration to Asian cities, not least of all to the city of Hong Kong.

6.3. Reaching the global public

The journeys of Marina Bay, however, were not limited to circulation within specialist knowledge networks. Indeed, much of its travels occurred through more ordinary and publicly visible means, from foreign newspaper reports to the stories and photographs carried by tourists to Singapore back to their home countries. From the early to mid-2000s, news of Singapore's Marina Bay project was carried occasionally by news media in nearby countries. Taiwan's *Central News Agency* (13 April 2004) highlighted its proposed development of a S$40 million waterfront promenade while *The Korea Herald* (16 September 2006) spared no hyperbole in describing Marina Bay as a 'grand vision' and 'ambitious expansion' of land that would allow Singapore to become Asia's financial hub. By the late 2000s, international coverage had grown exponentially with many reports emphasizing how Marina Bay would place Singapore ahead in a world of increasingly intensive intercity competition. Echoing much of the Singapore government's desired rhetoric of global recognition, Perth's *Sunday Times* (25 February 2007) noted that Marina Bay's exciting new attractions will 'propel the Lion City into the upper echelons of tourism pacesetters such as Dubai, Hong Kong and Macau', while Thailand's *Bangkok Post* (15 August 2009) reported that 'the Lion City's new showcase' of the Marina Bay Financial Centre was easily 'challenging Hong Kong and

Tokyo' as a leading world business and financial hub. The intense buzz of activity at Marina Bay was also seen as an impressive indicator of success, especially so in a world experiencing an economic downturn. *Sydney Morning Herald* (8 August 2009) for example dubbed the Marina Bay Business and Financial Centre (BFC) as 'one of the biggest construction sites in the world still working in the world', thus causing Singapore to ride far ahead of its once-competitor Dubai that has now come to a 'virtual standstill'. With all this publicity, it is unsurprising that Marina Bay was chosen as the focal landscape for free public tours conducted in Singapore during International Tourist Guide Day 2011. Interviewing the guides during their lunch break (Group interview, 12 March 2011), it was clear that Singapore's dramatic transformation and its accompanying rhetoric of development was a key message they wished to convey:

> Researcher: So as tourist guides do you all feel that you play important role in shaping the impressions people have of Singapore?
>
> Khatijah: [nods vigorously] Most definitely. We are ambassadors of Singapore!
>
> Johnson: Yes, I definitely agree with Khatijah. We are very proud of Singapore! When you know about the past and compare it with the present oh my goodness, there's such a drastic change. We have really, really developed.

When asked more specifically about Marina Bay, their enthusiasm visibly grew:

> Jean Wang: I'm very excited about Marina Bay! In Singapore we cannot grow mountains. People are selling icebergs, or glaciers, and Japan used to sell cherry blossoms, but Singapore – what do we have? *I think Marina Bay is a miracle*. On our own we wouldn't have dreamed that where the sea used to be would have Marina Bay Sands, Gardens by the Bay, Marina Bay Financial Centre, and a huge underground shopping mall. It's mindboggling. I don't want to let visitors go away with the idea that Singapore is just another city. If they don't have a guide, or if they don't read about it, how would they know that Marina Bay is on reclaimed land? And who says we can reclaim land there? Who's the one who put up the idea, where do you get the money, where do you get the sand? So there's a story to tell, you see…and the story is a visual one. It's very nice. (Interview, 7 April 2011, emphasis added)

Nevertheless, passion would be in vain without knowledge. The tourist guide quoted above is Jean Wang, chairperson of the SSTG who was heavily involved in International Tourist Guide Day 2011. A certified tourist guide and trainer herself, she describes the intensive rehearsals the guides had to undergo on top of their basic certification:

> Jean Wang: Well firstly the Guides Course is a very big thing. We have to slave many hours to get that guide badge. Once individuals become licensed guides, we take them in as members of our society [SSTG]. That's a base. As preparation for particular tour events, such as this one for Marina Bay, even though its voluntary work, we still provide training, because we want everyone to have more or less a standard tour itinerary, and to keep to a certain set of objectives. What we [the trainers] did was to have a half-day lecture where we give the guides historical data, followed by a walk-through in the afternoon. As a trainer, I will walk through the routes with them and say, 'Here say this, there say that'. The second part of the training is when they have their practice tour when they will be the ones talking and we'll be the ones giving our critique. (Interview, 7 April 2011)

It is crucial to note that the job of a tourist guide is very much a scripted performance. Sitting in for the pre-tour briefing for guides before the event, I could not help but notice the number of times the phrase 'We have a story to tell' came up (participation observation, 8 March 2011). Great emphasis was placed on telling the (singular) story in a consistent manner. Yet, a question that can (and should) be raised is whose story is being told. Based on Jean's elaboration (interview, 7 April 2011), it is evident that much of what frames the story of Marina Bay came from official, state-sponsored sources:

> Researcher: Where did you source for information to train these guides?
>
> Jean: Normally for historical data we all already have a base. Like for me, I've studied the history of Singapore for more than 30 years. So all of us have basic information on the history of Singapore at least from 1819 to the present. So we just need to pull up relevant information to conduct the Marina Bay tours. But because we're also going to the new attractions like the Marina Bay City Gallery, we also had to arrange educational visits.
>
> Researcher: Who conducts these educational visits?
>
> Jean: Well, URA is the one that set up the gallery. In the past they had an open house for guides. So for this event, we pulled out whatever information we received from URA. However, we have to

> select only some, because we only want tour participants to spend about 10-15 minutes at that spot. Guides also have the responsibility to do their own research. But for the purposes of quality control, we will say, 'At minimum, you must have this information'.

Given that Marina Bay is a relatively new development, even seasoned guides need to undergo training to update their knowledge. URA stepped up to plug that gap. As a result, much of the commentary provided by the guides echoed URA's marketing rhetoric through the repeated use of phrases commonly employed in promotional material: 'Marina Bay is a *24/7 live-work-play* environment'; 'We have a *necklace of attractions* all around the bay'; 'Marina Bay is a *seamless extension* of our current CBD' (participant observation, 12 March 2011). Many of these phrases were similar to those used by the URA official speaking to a group of conference delegates as discussed earlier thus confirming once again the convergence of sources. Nevertheless, as Wynn (2010: 147) argues, tour guides are also urban alchemists who can re-enchant places through their practices as 'passionate city boosters, unconventional historians, artists and activists who work to contribute to the culture of the city'. Indeed, while the guides did draw upon official narratives and stock phrases, many also included personal anecdotes that layered the landscape with alternative histories and stories of its rapid change:

> This place is called the Esplanade area. I used to come here when I was younger with my parents to eat *satay* [a popular Malay dish consisting of barbequed meat on skewers] in the open air. It was so good! There were many food centers here when I was this small [gestures playfully towards the ground with her palm], but now they are all gone. (Khatijah, tourist guide, participant observation, 12 March 2011)

In addition to insights gained both official and personal sources, guided tours also give foreign visitors experiential knowledge by enabling them to interact tangibly with Marina Bay. Going on such tours also allows them to capture their experiences in photographs, pictorial evidence that they can then carry back with them to their home countries:

> Researcher: So on the day itself two of the tours were walking tours whereas the other one was a bus tour. Is there a difference in the experience?

> Jean: I think in Singapore, when you tell people it's a walking tour people will immediately think, 'Too hot!' I personally think a walking tour is more intimate, more maximized, and you can tell more things, whereas on a bus it is very quick. But the Marina Bay area is really too big, and if we are just to talk about it from one angle it's too abstract. I want them to feel 'Wow! Marina Bay Sands is really big!' because when you drive by it, it is really quite long. And then if they think 'But I always thought the casino was together with the hotel' then they will realize, no, it's separated by a road. Also, I want them to see how the buildings are really tall, especially when you're right there and you feel so small beneath them as you take pictures. In that one hour you can package so much. If you walk, it will take 2.5 hours. (Interview, 7 April 2011)

Although the tours organized for International Tourist Guide Day 2011 are not entirely representative of the numerous tours of Marina Bay occurring in Singapore on a daily basis, they do give us some insight into how this landscape is being packaged and presented to foreign audiences. Nevertheless, it is not sufficient to stop here. While this chapter has illustrated how Marina Bay is travelling to both expert and general audiences, it has not yet examined the effects of these travels. The final section moves on to consider what impacts the travels of Marina Bay are having on places elsewhere through a case study of the Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resorts.

6.4. The travels of Marina Bay Sands

The Marina Bay Sands (MBS) Integrated Resort is an imposing superstructure that has transformed the skyline of Singapore. Designed by world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie, this iconic building has become a visual focal point in the global marketing of Marina Bay. The MBS Integrated Resorts' journey to development began on 12 March 2004 with a parliamentary announcement by then-Trade and Industry Minister George Yeo that the Singapore government was considering allowing a casino to boost the country's tourism potential (*The Business Times Singapore*, 27 May 2006). This was a controversial proposal that resulted in significant backlash, as it would require reversing Singapore's long-term ban on casinos. Nevertheless, public dissension about its potential social ills aside, the proposal eventually went ahead. By 10 November 2004, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

International Advisory Council had made known its support and an official Request-for-Concept for Integrated Resorts was launched on 29 December 2004 (see Table 14 for development milestones). After an intense competition that saw 19 international bids in its initial stages, tender was finally awarded to Las Vegas Sands Corporation on 26 May 2006. It was not, however, till mid-2010 that MBS was officially opened in stages, a delay from its expected 2009 opening due to the challenging construction of the MBS SkyPark as well as financial concerns due to the global economic downturn.

Table 14: MBS development milestones[11]

Date	Key Milestones
December 2004	Request-For-Concept for Integrated Resorts (IRs) at Marina Bayfront and Sentosa
November 2005	Request-For-Proposal for Marina Bay IR
30 March 2006	Las Vegas Sands Corporation submits US$3.6 billion proposal to develop Marina Bay IR
26 May 2006	Award of Tender to Las Vegas Sands Corporation
23 August 2006	Signing of official Development Agreement between Las Vegas Sands and Singapore Tourism Board
8 February 2007	Commencement of construction ceremony
4 January 2008	Las Vegas Sands announces completion of financing for MBS
8 July 2009	Topping-off ceremony of MBS three 55-storey towers
1 October 2009	Construction of MBS Skypark commences with heavy lifting
20 December 2009	MBS Skypark scheduled to be completed within weeks
27 April 2010	Preview opening of MBS
23 June 2010	Official opening of MBS
17 February 2011	Grand opening of MBS + ArtScience museum

The run-in to the opening of MBS was positioned to attract a large amount of attention by international media. Its topping-off ceremony of its three 55-storey towers held on 8 July 2009 was witnessed not only by Singapore government officials and distinguished guests, but also 120 representatives from local and regional media that no doubt contributed to the flurry of media reports in subsequent days (*Business Trends Asia,* 11 July 2009). Interestingly, some foreign reports chose not only to report about MBS but also highlight how local companies had a finger in its pie. Malaysia's *New Straits Times* (11 July 2009) for example, told of how a Malaccan-based company, DK Composites, had won a coveted

[11] Information sourced from *Business Trends Asia* (11 July 2009), *Channel News Asia* (24 April 2010), Las *Vegas Sands Corp. Press Release* (30 March 2006; 23 August 2006; 4 January 2008; 20 December 2009; 17 February 2011), SafdieArchitects (2010), *URA News Releases* (8 February 2007)

RM43.5 million contract to build the MBS ArtScience Museum, a key and visible attraction of MBS. Proudly noting that the lotus-shaped structure would be 'one of Southeast Asia's most prominent architectural and engineering feats', the company's executive chairman expressed his delight at winning such a high-profile 'overseas contract' as indicative of the ability of Malaysian companies to manufacture 'world-class' products to 'compete at the global level'. Similarly, KONE, an international elevator and escalator company founded in Finland that won a EUR30 million order from MBS to supply its three hotel towers reported that it was 'pleased to be part of this prestigious and significant project' in Singapore (*Asia Pulse*, 7 February 2008). Indeed, from the vocabulary used, it is clear that many perceived MBS to embody an international prestige that they would be able to bask in and feed off. Such acts of association aside, much of MBS' publicity also centered on its potential to revolutionize the local tourism scene. Echoing Sheldon Adelson, chairman of Las Vegas Sands Corporation who believed that the MBS would 'change the conservative perception of what Singapore has in the night time' (*The Nation*, 3 July 2010), Australia's *The Sun-Herald* enthused that its casino, the country's first, could definitely help the city-state 'shake its boring image for good' (14 February 2010). These metaphors of transformation continued after its opening, with Australia's *The Daily Telegraph* (7 July 2011) describing MBS as giving Singapore an 'extreme makeover' worthy of a reality TV series, and *Korea Times* (29 September 2011) calling it an 'unprecedented face-lift' for the island state. Meanwhile, inter-city competition for tourism was also top on the minds of many regional players. *Thai Press Reports* (9 July 2009) noted that the MBS Integrated Resorts would likely allow Singapore to attract 17 million visitors annually that would exceed Thailand's average of 14 million, while *Korea Times* reported that MBS had intensified Singapore's position as 'an object of envy for Korean tourism officials'. Certainly, the opening of MBS has awakened hopes for Singapore's tourism industry, and the possibility of this small nation-state becoming a 'global tourism powerhouse' (*Korea Times*, 29 September 2011) may indeed be well within reach.

The wealth of attention given to MBS by the international news media both through print and online sources has certainly enabled the development to travel. Yet, one of the reasons for the rapidity of its travels is arguably its eye-catching architectural design. The iconicity of MBS, while not entirely planned, was certainly desired by the government in the development of Marina Bay. At the unveiling of the Marina Bay brand on 21 July 2005, then-Minister for National Development, Mah Bow Tan pointed out that 'distinctiveness in urban design' was crucial in order to position Singapore as a world-class city. Pledging to make the Singapore skyline 'one of the most beautiful in the world', he hinted that it is very likely for 'an iconic building' to be erected at Marina Bay in the next few years (*Channel News Asia*, 21 July 2005). His projection came to fulfillment in 2006 when Las Vegas Sands won the bid to develop MBS in a competition where, once again, architectural design and iconicity made up 30% of the evaluation criteria (*The Straits Times*, 27 May 2006). Moshe Safdie's design concept was stunning, not least of all due to its impressive cantilever 200m high SkyPark perched on top of the three sloping towers that has been touted an engineering marvel. As Australia's *The Sun Herald* (14 February 2010) puts it, MBS 'manages to achieve the impossible and eclipse even Dubai's wildest engineering concepts'. Newspapers worldwide carried stories of the famous SkyPark's mind-blowing proportions (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 June 2011; The *Nation*, 3 July 2010; *The Sun Herald*, 14 February 2010) – its 340m length is as long as four-and-a-half A380 jumbo jets, or as long as the Eiffel Tower is high. Continuing such strategic acts of cross-referencing to other forms of iconic architecture, its three sloping towers were also noted to lean at '10 times the slant of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy' (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 June 2011). Consequently, its sheer size and scale also led it to be featured in television documentaries such as Discovery Channel's *Extreme Engineering* and National Geographic Channel's *MegaStructures*, thus attracting even greater attention from global audiences. Furthermore, even while MBS was under construction, high hopes were already being pinned on it for its potential to become an iconic symbol for Singapore. Its company vice-president, George Tanasijevich, dubbed it 'Singapore's Sydney Opera House' (*Sunday Times*, 25 February 2007) while Las Vegas Sands' president, Michael

Leven confidently declared that it will 'be the most photographed building of its kind in the world…[that] might even rival the Sydney Opera House', an architectural wonder that he 'wouldn't be surprised to see it on picture postcards' (*Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 27 April 2010). URA's IPE member, Sir Peter Hall, likewise agrees (interview, 30 August 2011):

> The one thing you have done, or what Moshe Safdie claims he has done for you, is that he's created the iconic building. Every city wants the iconic building, ever since the Sydney Opera House, and you've got it here. There's no doubt that this is the Singapore skyline…there's nothing like it anywhere else in the world. It's rather like the Guggenheim [Museum] in Bilbao. It's very difficult to produce such buildings by the way. You can't just say to an architect, however prestigious, give me an iconic building, you know. Even the greatest architect can fail.

Similarly, Just, a licensed tourist guide who has conducted many tours of Marina Bay also plays on its visual iconicity by comparing it to the Oriental Pearl Tower of Shanghai in his tour commentary (participation observation, 12 March 2011, emphasis added):

> Now we are approaching the famous Marina Bay Sands, but no sorry we won't be going into the casino. If I'm to draw a circle and two lines – where do you think of? Shanghai right? From now on when people draw three buildings and a line across the top, *people will think of Singapore*.

While it is debatable what makes a building iconic, it does appear that Singapore (and Moshe Safdie) has succeeded in producing iconicity through MBS. Yet, claiming the unique architecture of MBS as Singapore's own may soon be outdated. On 29 November 2011, Singapore's largest property developer, CapitaLand, announced that it had beaten 5 other bidders for a 9.2 hectare Chao Tian Men site situated next to the traditional business district of Jie Fang Bei in the Chinese city of Chongqing. Banding together with CapitaMalls Asia Limited and Singbridge Holdings (a unit of Temasek Holdings), the consortium's proposed development would be located at a prime site at the tip of the peninsula in Yuzhung District with the land itself costing a total of S$1.283 billion (Singapore Government News, 29 November 2011). Upon construction of the mixed-used complex, the cost is expected to rise to S$4.3 billion and provide 817,000 square meters of gross floor area, 41% of which will be

allocated to residential use (*The Straits Times*, 30 November 2011). Given that there has been in the past decade growing economic linkages[12] between Chongqing and Singapore, this move is by no means unprecedented. However, while the impressive scale and cost of the project was not particularly surprising, what caught the eye of many was its architectural similarity to Singapore's Marina Bay Sands (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Marina Bay Sands vs. Proposed Chao Tian Men development
(Shanghaiist.com, 7 December 2011)

As CEO of CapitaLand, Mr Liew Mun Leong claims, design was an important factor considered in the awarding of tender for the site and the reason why the consortium's proposal stood out was due to its superior architectural design (*The Edge Singapore*, 5 December, 2011). Looking at Figure 7 above, it is easy to see why CapitaLand's design concept caught the eye of the Chongqing government. Given that this plot of land is strategically located on a peninsula that has been said to represent Manhattan, what better way to pay tribute to New York City than to build an enormous complex of skyscraping towers right at its tip? Consisting of eight high-rise towers, the entire cluster when completed will boast hotels, residences, a shopping mall and prime office space, all of which will be seamlessly integrated with a transport hub including a bus interchange, a ferry terminal and a cruise centre. Yet, while the development's potential offerings certainly stirred up the

[12] According to *The Straits Times* (14 January, 2012), foreign direct investment from Singapore into Chongqing has increased six times, from US$19 million in 2004, to US$126.3 million in 2010. The number of new Singapore projects in the city has also doubled to 14 in 2010 from seven between 2007 and 2009.

imaginations of many, the same cannot be said for its architectural design. Most damningly, it appeared to have been done before! The mastermind behind the Chaotianmen development is after all none other than Israeli-born Moshe Safdie, the starchitect behind Singapore's Marina Bay Sands. While Safdie Architects describes the design as 'inspired by the image of sailing ships on the river…intended to serve as a symbol of both Chongqing's noble past as a trading center and its fast-growing future as one of China's largest and most important modern cities' (Safdie Architects, 2011), its similarities to MBS are unmistakable. Not only does it have the same sloping towers overlooking the water; it also replicates the famous Skypark that has made MBS so distinctive. However, while *The Wall Street Journal* (29 November, 2011) chose to dub this 'Singapore-on-Yangtze', other reports were not as flattering. Lifestyle weblog, *Shanghaiist.com*, for instance, published a biting critique that quoted Shanghai-based Dutch architect Daan Roggeveen as describing it to be 'an absolute chutzpah':

> First of all, it is an almost literal copy of their Marina Sands Bay scheme in Singapore. Secondly, the metaphor of the sailing ships is too cheap to be true, especially when it is combined with the roof garden. Creating a huge north-south orientated residential complex because of market demands, and then calling it the sails of a ship because it happens to be next to a river is a bit too simple for me, especially when you work for such an interesting client…It seems the architect did nothing to relate the building in a true way to its magnificent location in one of the most thrilling square kilometers of Asia…The interesting thing is that Singapore once again proves to be the example for Chinese inland cities. But time has come for these cities to develop their own architectural icons - and stay away from letting the architects repeat themselves. (Shanghaiist.com, 7 December 2011)

Shanghaiist.com was not the only one slamming CapitaLand for condoning the work of a 'lazy architect'. Chinese citizens too reacted strongly against the proposed design both online and offline, criticisms which CapitaLand claims have been taken into account albeit resulting in somewhat conciliatory tweaks such as the addition of a 'stairway concept into the tower blocks to reflect the multiple staircases around the hilly city' (*The Straits Times*, 11 January 2012). Nevertheless, given that Chongqing's mayor Huang Qifan continued to defend the original design as being reflective of the city's unique traits, it is remains to be seen if

public dissent over its similarities to Singapore's architectural icon will eventually have a significant influence.

In summary, this last empirical chapter has built upon the previous two to illustrate how Marina Bay is not only a product of various travels but is also a landscape capable of travelling to both specialist and general audiences. What is interesting here is that Singapore appears to have successfully concealed the translocal inspiration and labor that went into assembling Marina Bay and is instead marketing the landscape as a successful model bearing the Singapore brand. Nevertheless, as this chapter has shown, an inevitable paradox of learning also governs these processes of intercity emulation. As Chua (2011: 40) notes, many cities 'inevitably misrecognize the success of Singapore as the achievements of a city rather than a nation'. To replicate the necessary historical, political and economic conditions that would be favorable to reproducing Singapore's success is almost impossible. For example, although Hong Kong's waterfront shares great similarities with Singapore, what is arguably the most important ingredient – a centralized planning body supported by the state – is sorely missing. In the case of Chongqing, possessing an MBS lookalike is unlikely to propel the city onto an equal global standing. On the contrary, the design has been the subject of much ridicule and seems to be more reflective of the city's insecurities than an articulation of its global city aspiration. In other words, the travels of Marina Bay, and the travels of cities, will always have its limits. The final chapter will consider what all this means for our understanding of cities on the move.

7. CONCLUSION

In their recent book chapter, Lowry & McCann (2011) present an intriguing narrative of waterfronts as travelling urban forms. Tracing the movement of capital, people, architecture and knowledge between Hong Kong, Vancouver and Dubai, they argue that the geographically dispersed waterfronts of these three cities are in actual fact inextricably intertwined. From the purchasing of land at Vancouver's Pacific Place by Hong Kong investors, to a visit to Vancouver's False Creek by Emaar Properties' Chairman, Mohammed Ali Alabbar, all three waterfronts emerge as nodes in the global circulation of urban knowledge. Singapore's Marina Bay is likewise situated within such tapestries of travel. Merchant ships may no longer play this part of Singapore's waters, but traders of a different sort have been bringing ideas and inputs to make this landscape happen. As this thesis has shown, even as Marina Bay's envisioning was discursively inspired by the success of other cities and waterfronts (Chapter Four), more tangible acts of learning and borrowing of expertise were also at work as state actors actively courted individual experts and global design firms from abroad (Chapter Five). Furthermore, Marina Bay itself is also beginning to travel to both expert and general audiences worldwide with cities such as Hong Kong and Chongqing looking to it as a model of inspiration (Chapter Six). All this illustrates how it was the overlapping mobilities of *people* (talent and expertise), *places* (buildings and built form) and *policies* (ideas and knowledge) that enabled Singapore not only to learn from best practices elsewhere, but also to become itself a model of best practice. In this final chapter, I suggest that studying the travels of Marina Bay has been useful for at least three reasons.

Firstly, studying the travels of Marina Bay offers a detailed study of how cities are produced out of elsewheres. It thus reminds us that urban transformation today is not only a local phenomenon but also one that is situated within larger circuits of discourses, knowledge, policies, capital and expertise that circulate the globe. As Guggenheim & Söderström (2010: 3, emphasis original) put it succinctly, 'the *here* in the built environment is always also an *elsewhere*'. In their edited collection, Edensor (2010) presents us with a visually arresting

image of how this is so. Using the example of St Ann's Church in Manchester, he notes that the replacement of worn-out building stone sourced from different quarries over the years has led to its stonework possessing a distinctively 'multi-hued character' (pp. 219). In quite the same way, Marina Bay too is a patchwork of other places. From acts of inter-referencing and symbolic positioning (Chapter Four) to the courting of global talent from abroad (Chapter Five), Marina Bay emerges from a coming together of different ideas and should be recognized as a fundamentally translocal landscape. Indeed, all of this is a rarely seen side of spectacular urban landscapes that often demand us to pay attention to their visibly impressive concrete and local effects. While Marina Bay is certainly an exclusive (and even exclusionary) landscape that would make an excellent case study of everyday spatial contestations, focusing only on its effects in place would mean glossing over the far-reaching politics of its translocal (re)production. In contrast, by situating Marina Bay within wider flows and relations (Chapter Two) and employing appropriate methodologies to explore the mobilities that have gone into its making (Chapter Three), we can begin to see that the (re)production of spectacular landscapes often stretches far beyond the city itself. In doing so, we can thus contribute to deconstructing the bounded city in both theory and practice.

Secondly, studying the travels of Marina Bay throws greater light on the translocal practices that go into the (re)production of urban landscapes. It therefore asks crucial empirical questions about the labor and actors that made Marina Bay happen. As this thesis has shown, the making of Marina Bay was made possible by a wide range of (non)human actors that brought ideas from elsewhere – from design firms to individual experts, and from company wide intranet systems to personal iPads (Chapter Five). Yet, the journeys taken by these ideas were by no means straightforward. On the one hand, these ideas were subject to processes of negotiation, adaptation and even rejection as they became emplaced in the local landscape. The Singapore Flyer, for instance, was not a carbon copy of the London Eye and neither were all the ideas put forth by IPE members eventually accepted. On the other hand, many of these ideas brought to Singapore were already in and of themselves an agglomeration

of ideas sourced from many places worldwide. Nevertheless, focusing only on these foreign individuals and firms is insufficient. As this thesis has shown, local state actors too were heavily involved in the development and marketing of Marina Bay. In much of the literature on cities as mobile, the role of the state is often glossed over, an exclusion that is likely reflective of a broader Anglo-American bias in the literature that ignores the '*differential* paths that cities follow as they globalize or are globalized' (Olds & Yeung, 2004: 492, emphasis original). Long recognized as a developmental state, the envisioning of Marina Bay was likewise highly state-driven. From URA planners who made study trips abroad (Chapter Four), to prominent government officials who delivered speeches on Marina Bay at high-profile international urban fairs (Chapter Six), state actors were playing important roles on a transnational arena to plan and promote Marina Bay to the world. By foregrounding these state-driven processes, this thesis hopes to have raised the profile of the state as an equally important transfer agent worthy of study, thus highlighting the need to be sensitive to the differentiated contexts that frame the travels of cities.

Finally, studying the travels of Marina Bay underscores the uneven politics that produce cities out of elsewheres. The way in which cities learn from each other is not a random process. Instead, cities make deliberate decisions in choosing which other cities to learn from, acts that very often seem to suggest the persistence of particular forms of uneven power relations. Post-colonial scholars have certainly been fighting hard to demonstrate that alternative – and more horizontal – modes of inspiration exist. Robinson (2006) for instance has pointed out that even New York City was a borrower of inspiration from other countries, an anecdote that not only destabilizes New York (and the global North) as *the* source of modern urbanism, but also implies that *all* cities are capable of inspiring. Yet, does this then mean that perceptions of hierarchies in intercity learning do not exist? Hardly so. Indeed, contrary to Roy & Ong's (2011) argument on inter-Asia referencing, the study of Marina Bay reveals quite an opposite case in which an Asian city explicitly turned to the West in search of ideas. The inter-references that peppered the pages of planning reports and media releases

were notably Western ones – Sydney's Darling Harbor, Baltimore's Inner Harbor, New York City's skyline (Chapter Four); the IPE consists predominantly of experts from the global North hailing from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and France; even the winners of international design competitions were mostly foreign firms based in Western countries (Chapter Five). In somewhat expected fashion, the cities that subsequently turned to Marina Bay as a model were not from the global North but the Asian cities of Hong Kong and Chongqing (Chapter Six). While the former has had a long history of knowledge exchange with Singapore given its similarities as an urbanized city-state (although Singapore did remain the only Asian city on its study tour itinerary), the latter appears to be doing so due to Singapore's recognized standing in this part of the world. Rather unnervingly, what appears to be emerging is a reassertion of the very urban hierarchies that urban scholars have been urging us to move away from (Robinson, 2005; Roy, 2009). Yet, as this thesis has shown, perceptions of hierarchies do not mean that cities end up blindly reproducing the success stories of others. Fears that Singapore will one day possess geographies of 'everywhere and nowhere' (Chang & Huang, 2008) are likely to be unfounded. Therefore, while the elsewhere-ness of urban landscapes can be read as illustrating the ferocious onslaught of neoliberal globalization, I concur with Massey (2004) that cities are not passive victims to be defended against an imagined intruder. Rather, the fact that cities are on the move means that they are very much works-in-progress, a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005: 9), a recognition that should empower cities to become spaces of possibility and promise.

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